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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 30 April 2003

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

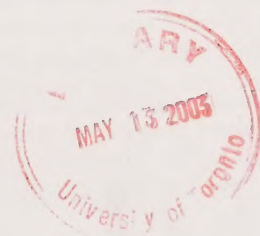
Mercredi 30 avril 2003

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers





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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 April 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 avril 2003

*The first day of the fourth session of the 37th Parliament of the province of Ontario commenced at 1600 pursuant to a proclamation of the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of the province.*

*His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to open the session by reading the speech from the throne.*

### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

#### DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

**Hon James K. Bartleman (Lieutenant Governor):**  
Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, fellow citizens.

In the past few weeks, Ontario has faced an outbreak of SARS. This global disease has created a significant health care crisis.

While remaining vigilant, your government places its faith in the extraordinary courage and professionalism of Ontario's nurses, doctors, paramedics, medical researchers, lab technicians, scientists and other front-line heroes. To them, and to the families who stood by through long days and sleepless nights, all Ontarians owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. These men and women are turning the tide in Ontario's battle against SARS, and proving to the world that Ontario is a safe place to live in and visit.

To the families who have lost loved ones to this disease, we extend our deepest condolences.

To continue healing the damage caused by SARS, your government has pledged to help hospitals deal with SARS-related backlogs, compensate workers and protect and promote our economy. It will introduce legislation today that would, if passed, protect workers' jobs and strengthen powers to curb the spread of SARS and other infectious diseases. In the days and weeks ahead, your government will take further steps to address these challenges.

It is at times like these that Ontarians' values shine through.

Ontarians are competitive, but compassionate. We are successful, but believe that no one must be left behind. We are proud of our achievements, but believe in the promise of an even brighter future for our province.

It is the promise of Ontario that has encouraged people and families from all over the world to begin new lives here. It is the promise of Ontario that has inspired hard-working men and women to build successful businesses and strong communities. It is the promise of Ontario that

inspires our citizens—young and old—to hope, dream and achieve.

It is this promise that motivates your government and that has brought the members of this assembly here to serve Ontario's people and help build its future.

On behalf of our Sovereign, welcome to the fourth session of Ontario's 37th Parliament.

Since the assembly last met, Ontario has lost three distinguished former members:

Frank Drea, whose straightforwardness with colleagues made him a popular MPP and whose efforts as an advocate for consumers, workers and the disabled made him a respected leader;

Ron McNeil, who represented the people of Elgin county for three decades and whose hard work on behalf of fellow farmers won him the appreciation of people of all political stripes; and

Russ Ramsay, whose gentlemanly service, kindness and strong principles endeared him to the citizens of Sault Ste Marie and the people of Ontario and elevated him to the Order of Canada.

In January, four employees of the Ministry of Natural Resources died in a helicopter crash near Sault Ste Marie while carrying out their duties. Your government mourns the loss of Michael Maguire, Walter Ceolin, Bruce Stubbs and Chantelle Walkey and will dedicate a new conservation reserve to their memory.

Ontario also recently lost one of its most beloved leaders. Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter was a remarkable scholar who worked relentlessly in pursuit of social justice. For 53 years, he worked tirelessly to serve the people of Ontario, regardless of religious faith. His determination to tackle controversial issues head-on won him the respect of leaders and lay people alike, and his loss is felt not only by the Catholic community, but all Ontarians.

We remember those killed during the war in Iraq. While your government deplores war's tragic cost, it also hopes that conflict—led by our American and British friends and allies—will achieve a lasting peace for the people of Iraq, who have suffered under tyranny and oppression.

The throne speech is a symbol of our parliamentary democracy. In it, your government traditionally tells citizens about its plans and priorities for the years ahead.

This year's throne speech is different.

Your government believes that strong leadership is about consultation, not capitulation. It is about principles,



not ideology. It is about balancing priorities for all, not giving in to the interests of a few.

Most importantly, it is about encouraging people to share their ideas, work together and speak their minds. That's why your government launched its innovative throne speech consultation process.

Today, as never before, the people have spoken.

Ontarians said that they want a strong economy that creates jobs and lets them keep more of their hard-earned wages. Your government has listened.

Ontarians said they are proud of our province's health care system and want it strengthened. Your government has listened.

They have called for schools that promote excellence and equality of opportunity. Your government has listened.

They have asked that our natural environment be preserved for generations. They have demanded that government be more accountable for the tax dollars it spends. They want the province's streets to be safer and its borders secure.

To these requests, and more, your government has listened.

Some might say that listening is an end in itself. Your government believes it is only a good beginning.

Today, your government sets out an ambitious action plan to keep our province competitive and compassionate—to display the values of hard work, humility and excellence seen so often in our citizens and epitomized in the success of the 2003 Masters champion, Ontario's own Mike Weir.

**1610**

Your government has a plan to build a better quality of life for every Ontario family.

To create an equal opportunity for success.

To support the most vulnerable.

Today, your government resolves to devote its energy and experience to seeing the promise of Ontario fulfilled.

Since 1995, your government has helped create more than 1.1 million new jobs, dramatically cut taxes, removed barriers to growth, eliminated an \$11-billion deficit, started paying down Ontario's debt and helped over 600,000 people get off welfare and find the dignity that comes with a job.

While these are remarkable accomplishments, they do not belong to your government, but to all the Ontarians who seized the opportunities afforded by a strong economy.

Seule une économie vigoureuse permet d'investir dans des secteurs prioritaires comme la santé, l'éducation, la sécurité publique et l'environnement. Seule une économie vigoureuse nous donne les moyens d'effectuer des investissements sans précédent, tout en maintenant l'équilibre budgétaire.

Only a strong economy supports investment in priorities such as health care, education, secure communities and the natural environment. Only a strong economy provides the means to make record investments while maintaining a balanced budget.

For the first time since 1908, an Ontario government has introduced five consecutive balanced budgets. It will continue to balance the books.

Your government has paid down \$5 billion in provincial debt and will continue to pay down Ontario's debt to ensure long-term growth and prosperity.

Your government remains committed to further reducing the income tax rate for small businesses to 5% in 2004 and 4% in 2005. Upon full implementation, more than 125,000 businesses will benefit.

The evidence is clear and convincing—by living within its means, by cutting taxes, balancing priorities and refusing to borrow from future generations to pay for today's success, your government has restored faith in Ontario's economy.

Despite the economic success our province has enjoyed, history has shown that without strong leadership, such gains are easily lost.

Today is tax filing day. Today, Ontarians are especially aware of how much tax they pay—and how much your government has cut taxes in the province.

There are some who feel it is perfectly acceptable for government to consume ever-larger portions of Ontarians' paycheques.

Not your government.

It believes that when Ontarians decide how to spend their own money, we all benefit—and the best way to ensure that they have money to spend is not to tax it away in the first place. Your government believes that tax cuts spur job creation and result in greater revenue. While it has reduced taxes by \$16 billion, government revenues have increased by the same amount over the same period.

That's why this year's budget proposed 17 additional tax cuts for seniors, businesses and wage earners. That's why, since 1995, your government has announced 225 tax cuts, giving workers and their families more money to spend, save or invest.

Olive Russell of Brampton, who joins us here today, says: "I think my husband, Frank, and I have more than paid our share of taxes over the last 60 years."

Your government agrees. It will introduce legislation that will provide a tax credit for seniors for the provincial portion of their property tax. It will also introduce legislation to allow more seniors to remain active in the workforce—retiring at a time of their own choosing, not an arbitrary, government-appointed time. It would also give them the resources necessary to stay in their homes and remain active, productive members of society.

To honour the contributions of our veterans, your government is investing \$1 million in the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France. The centre honours Canadian soldiers who landed on D-Day, inspiring all Canadians through their example. Through the Dominion Institute, your government pledges to record the stories of these heroes for the youth of the future.

Your government believes that a job is the best social program. Continued job growth, spurred by tax cuts and a strong economy, will help unemployed citizens get back on their feet and participate in the promise of Ontario.



Your government recognizes that there are some Ontarians who need extra help to cope with disabilities. It understands that people with disabilities often have special needs that make it difficult for them to work. That's why it will increase Ontario disability support program payments to better help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and dignified lives.

Your government will reform support for children with special needs to ensure that parents have a greater say in how their needs are met.

Because no child should live in poverty or depend on welfare, your government will provide a special benefit to meet the unique needs of children who require a helping hand. In the coming weeks, your government will unveil further details of this enriched and compassionate benefit.

To ensure that support keeps going where it is needed, your government will continue to crack down on welfare fraud and abuse. Those who commit welfare fraud are stealing from those who need help the most. Every penny your government has recovered from welfare fraud will continue to be returned to the system.

To protect Ontario's family farms and the rights of farm workers, your government is implementing legislation to ensure that our unique agricultural sector is protected from labour disruptions.

To ensure that farmers are protected from circumstances such as droughts or fluctuating markets, your government will provide stability for Ontario farmers. It wishes to work with the federal government to find solutions, but will always be there to support Ontario's farmers.

Your government will also continue working with farmers and provide them with financial support to carry out a nutrient management strategy that will keep our environment protected and our farms strong.

Linda Lockey of Ridgeville wrote your government to say that: 'Everyone wants to protect the farmland,' farmers included. It is every taxpayer's responsibility to protect and save the farmland for future generations.'

The challenges faced in rural Ontario are not the same as those faced in urban communities. That's why, in the coming weeks, your government will unveil a comprehensive rural strategy aimed at addressing the concerns raised by people in rural communities. Your government will strengthen the rural economy, protect services and preserve the cherished way of life so important to Ontario's countryside.

To help protect farmers, small businesses and families, your government is also taking a comprehensive approach to our energy sector, including increasing supply, creating an integrated conservation plan and ensuring that pricing is stable.

1620

Your government knows that a growing economy has growing energy needs. We must never take our energy supply for granted.

Your government will ensure that Ontarians have a supply of power today, tomorrow and into the future. It

will work with the private sector on the Portlands Energy Centre project and the Niagara Tunnel project. It will pursue agreements with the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec to help supply Ontarians with the power they need.

Your government knows that the energy needs of the 21st century will require comprehensive and innovative solutions. Your government will aggressively pursue technologies to meet Ontario's energy supply needs for generations to come. It will explore options such as wind, hydrogen, solar and generating electricity from waste.

Providing additional generation is only half of the solution. Ontarians have said they want affordable, practical energy conservation measures and cleaner sources of power. Starting immediately, your government will phase out coal-fired generating stations no later than 2015.

Solutions are already on the market that will help Ontario achieve its energy conservation goals, but more must be done to get energy efficient products into the homes of consumers who want them.

Moorefield resident Joan Norris has asked your government to: "Educate the public. Everyone has to be more conscious of saving electricity."

Your government has heard her request and will develop an integrated energy conservation strategy that will include government, the broader public sector and consumers. It proposes to enable people who want to produce their own electricity to more easily sell power back to their local utility—as is done in Europe and the United States—develop more tax incentives and a renewable portfolio standard for green energy.

In addition to all these measures, your government will continue to cut taxes, balance the books, reduce debt and help create new jobs so that Ontario will enjoy the best-performing economy and the highest quality of life in North America.

This is an ambitious goal, but an achievable one. Ontario is already well on its way.

Your government will achieve this goal, not because it is ideologically driven, but because it is motivated by values and principles—the same values and principles it shares with all Ontarians.

Hospitals are more than bricks and mortar. They bring us together in times of joy—such as the birth of a child. They bring us together in times of grief—such as when we say goodbye to a loved one for the last time.

Nurses are more than dedicated professionals—we trust them to care for people we love.

Doctors are more than medical practitioners—we turn to them in times of need.

Ontarians have invested more than our tax dollars in our health care system—it has become part of our identity and the envy of the world.

Your government understands this, and thanks to a strong economy, it has been able to invest another \$1.9 billion in health care this year—over \$10 billion more than in 1995. Your government has created the first new medical school in 30 years and has increased the number



of medical school spaces by 30%. It has also provided funding to create over 12,000 nursing positions and by 2005 will have created 750 nurse practitioner positions.

Your government believes that each Ontarian—from the youngest to the oldest—deserves the best, most up-to-date care. It has worked hard to modernize the system and find new ways to deliver excellent, universally accessible health care for our families.

By making record investments in long-term care, increasing home care services, and providing innovative services such as Telehealth Ontario, your government has made it possible for hospitals to direct resources where they are most urgently needed.

Andrea Butcher Milne, who has multiple sclerosis and is the mother of a four-year-old, says: "I feel that my local health care centre's role in maintaining my health has prevented thousands of dollars you might normally have spent treating the symptoms of my illness."

Your government believes that, despite significant new investments, Ontario's health care system is only a success if it helps all Ontarians. Health care investments must help reduce and eliminate waiting times, increase access to doctors and nurses, strengthen our hospitals, cure diseases and result in new technology that improves patient care.

To improve access to doctors, your government will increase the number of international medical graduates training to practise in Ontario by 20%. It will provide free tuition for current and future medical school students who agree to practise in underserved areas or join family health networks.

To increase the number of nurses practising in Ontario, your government will launch an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program. This will include free tuition for nursing students who agree to begin their careers in underserved areas. Your government will work to break down the barriers faced by nurse practitioners to expand their numbers and the range of services that they are able to provide.

To support the health care needs of children in the north, your government will invest nearly \$6.5 million to support the Electronic Child Health Network North. The network provides an electronic link between health care professionals and families in the north and hundreds of pediatricians and health care professionals in southern Ontario. This is one step in your government's plan to create a children's health network.

Between 1996 and 2002, your government cut cardiac surgery waiting times in half. Your government's investments have reduced waiting times in emergency rooms.

But there is more to do. No child, parent, senior or any citizen of a compassionate province should have to wait one moment longer than necessary to receive care.

That's why your government will engage Ontario's health professionals in developing guaranteed wait times for procedures such as general surgery, cataract procedures, cancer treatment and hip and knee replacements. It will do the same for diagnostic services such as MRIs.

There are few people in Ontario who have not been touched by cancer through a friend or family member.

Yet many experts believe that certain kinds of cancer—such as breast or prostate cancer—can be beaten.

As the late Dr Charles Hollenberg, world-renowned cancer researcher and former head of Cancer Care Ontario, said: "Finding a cure for breast and prostate cancer can be done. It just takes leadership."

Your government will provide that leadership. Our province's researchers have the expertise to help eliminate these deadly diseases. That's why your government will invest \$1 billion in a new Cancer Research Institute of Ontario.

Prevention and early detection are vital to effective treatment. That's why your government has added 30 new MRI machines since 1995 and has committed to an additional 20 MRIs and five new CT scanners.

Your government will improve hospitals and free up capital dollars for other priorities by allowing the private sector to provide and maintain the buildings—while relying on the public sector to provide quality care. Your government will continue to provide the services Ontarians depend upon and remains committed to universally accessible health care where and when Ontarians need it.

To ensure that St Peter's Hospital in Hamilton continues to provide care for young disabled adults and to meet the needs of some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens, your government will invest in improved continuing care facilities at the hospital.

Your government will also measure the success of health care improvements and ensure that health care dollars are spent wisely. That's why it has introduced stable multi-year funding for hospitals and will introduce legislation to create a permanent Health Quality Auditor to ensure excellent and efficient service.

**1630**

To help remove the stigma of mental illness and ease the suffering of those afflicted, your government is addressing the mental health needs of children and adults. In its budget, your government announced that it would invest \$250 million over five years to move forward with reform. Your government will launch a Premier's Council on mental health that will act as a driving force for change.

The aboriginal healing and wellness strategy helps aboriginal communities address health care services through traditional aboriginal teachings and mainstream health services. Your government will renew the strategy and enhance its operation through consultation with aboriginal peoples and their communities.

Your government knows that, when it comes to health care, there is always more to do.

There is always a need for new treatments and equipment to cure our sick. Your government will meet challenges that arise through compassion, accountability and a continued dedication to the men, women, seniors and children who rely on our health care system.

This is Education Week.

Tous les enfants de l'Ontario méritent une excellente éducation et des chances de succès égales dans la vie.



quelle que soit leur situation économique, le lieu où ils habitent, leurs origines culturelles ou leurs convictions religieuses.

Des générations de leaders, de chefs d'entreprise, d'enseignantes et enseignants et de membres des professions libérales doivent leur réussite à l'enseignement de qualité qui leur a été dispensé par nos écoles publiques élémentaires et secondaires.

Every child in Ontario deserves an excellent education and an equal opportunity for success in life, regardless of economic circumstances, geographic location, ethnic background or religious belief.

Generations of leaders, entrepreneurs, teachers and professionals succeeded because of the quality education afforded by our public elementary and secondary schools.

Yet, before your government was first elected, Ontario's educators found themselves frustrated by a system that pursued social promotion, not academic excellence, and whose inconsistent, board-by-board approach to funding privileged some schools over others.

In 1995, your government set out to improve our education system, acting on the principled, compassionate conviction that all Ontario's children must be given the means to fulfil their dreams.

That's why your government introduced a new, province-wide funding formula that treats all students equitably. It introduced a new curriculum, innovative programs such as early reading and early math and measures to ensure teaching excellence.

In the past, many young people were labelled as unteachable.

Not any more.

Today, we know that 10% to 15% of the population has some form of learning disability. We know that many learning-disabled children are of above-average intelligence, but also require extra support.

Your government is providing \$1.6 billion for special education for 2002-03 to make sure these children have the help they need to learn and succeed.

To ensure that your government's education funding reforms were on track, it commissioned Dr Mordechai Rozanski's Education Equality Task Force to prepare a report on Ontario's elementary and secondary schools.

Dr Rozanski confirmed your government's decisions, but made several recommendations to ensure that our schools continue to meet students' needs.

He recommended that an additional \$1.8 billion be invested over a three-year period. Within 24 hours of receiving the report, your government took action and has committed to funding that exceeds his recommendations.

As Dr Rozanski himself said: "Within four months, the government has taken seriously the recommendations and moved to implement more than \$1.8 billion in funding over three years."

No matter where they live in Ontario, parents want their children to have access to the opportunities a great education provides. That's why, as recommended by Dr Rozanski, your government will help its education

partners to find ways to strengthen schools in rural and northern communities.

Your government will continue to follow Dr Rozanski's recommendations, knowing that the promise of Ontario is achievable only if each and every young person is given the opportunity of an excellent education.

Eight years ago, your government set out to make that promise a reality.

Today, the new curriculum is firmly established in every grade of our school system. This June, the first students to study under the new curriculum will graduate from Ontario's high schools. Five years of provincial and international tests are available to clearly show our students' progress.

Your government's education reforms are not only comprehensive—the evidence shows they have been successful.

However, your government will continue to consult with parents, teachers and students on the best ways to continue encouraging excellence.

Sabrina Joseph of Hamilton wrote to your government to say: "Get the students involved in everything! Give us a voice ... we are the future, help us plan it and make it a good one!"

Your government will continue to help each student prepare for challenges and opportunities and give them the tools they need to make their voices heard.

That's why it requires students to meet rigorous literacy standards to receive a high school diploma. To help students thrive, your government will provide the remedial help some need to make the grade.

Your government will provide tools and resources to ensure phonics are available to all schools and encourage higher education in math by offering elementary school teachers scholarships to become math specialists.

It will allow athletes, musicians, artists and tradespeople to act as expert instructors or volunteers.

Your government will allow parents more choice to enrol their children in any available school within their board. Schools will still give first placement priority to students who live nearby.

To support parental choice, your government will introduce legislation to continue implementing the equity in education tax credit.

It is your government's priority to put kids first by ensuring that all students have consistent access to the education they deserve.

In the past, many Ontario students competed only with each other for jobs. But today, they're competing with students worldwide. That's why we must teach our students the skills they need to compete globally.

Your government has heard from students and parents who are worried that qualified students might be turned away from colleges and universities because grade 13 has been eliminated.

Let there be no doubt that every willing and qualified student will find a space in a post-secondary institution so that they can find a rewarding career and go on to fulfill their dreams of a home and family.

Your government has made that commitment.



Your government will keep that commitment.

It has already made significant investments in our post-secondary institutions to accommodate the increased enrolment for the upcoming school year. Along with its partners, your government is investing \$2.6 billion to create more than 135,000 new post-secondary student places—the largest capital investment in Ontario universities and colleges since the 1960s and the equivalent of almost nine McMaster Universities or nearly 11 Sheridan Colleges. It has also provided stability to our colleges and universities through multi-year operating funding and is providing an increase of 21% by 2005-06 over last year's funding.

Your government will take further measures to prepare students for a bright future by increasing its annual investment in colleges and universities, and demanding better accountability for results.

It will promote e-learning so that students anywhere in Ontario can still receive the benefit of a quality education.

To help students with learning disabilities, your government will continue to support the work of the Learning Opportunities Task Force under the direction of Dr Bette Stephenson. Because of the task force's work, learning-disabled students in each and every Ontario college and university have access to the help they need.

1640

This is a time of unprecedented opportunity and a crucial moment for many industries that require skilled workers. Your government is committed to encouraging young people to seek rewarding and exciting careers in the skilled trades.

Your government will also encourage skilled tradespeople to play an even greater role in mentoring and teaching apprentices. This builds on the proposals made in the 2003 budget. Your government will also encourage skilled, internationally trained workers to settle in Ontario and build new lives here.

These investments and improvements will help ensure that our students remain among the best trained and educated in the world. Not only will this help them achieve long-term success, it will help Ontario's economy continue to grow.

A strong economy requires that governments invest tax dollars wisely in priorities such as health care, education and infrastructure. School boards, hospitals, municipalities, colleges and universities have all said they could plan more effectively if they had multi-year base funding.

Your government is committed to delivering stable base funding on which its partners can depend. In return, taxpayers can expect to see better results and greater accountability in those sectors.

Your government also believes institutions that have the power to make decisions on your behalf must demonstrate fiscal responsibility.

Having taken measures to strengthen public sector accountability and transparency, your government believes that members who pay to keep organizations running should also know how their money is being

spent. That's why your government will take steps to require unions to operate on principles of democracy, transparency and accountability.

To ensure that high-quality, effective services are delivered and that funding is used for its intended purpose, your government will introduce legislation to provide quality auditors for health, education and municipal services.

Fiscal responsibility requires that everything government does, it does efficiently, while offering citizens the best service at the best price. Your government will continue to find internal savings and enshrine the practice of zero-based budgeting.

Over the past several years, your government has begun improving public services. While the Ontario public service has been reduced by 23%, it has won international awards that recognize its creative and innovative approach to public service. Businesses can now be registered in 20 minutes rather than six weeks. Automatic ServiceOntario kiosks in local malls allow citizens to renew vehicle licence plate stickers in a matter of minutes. But there is more to do.

Because Ontarians lead busy, active lives, your government will provide more services online, expand hours at service counters and increase the number of government kiosks.

All of these measures are designed to make Ontario's government and broader public sector more accountable to those it serves—Ontario's citizens. Because our democracy is a work in progress, your government remains committed to finding new ways to improve and modernize our democratic institutions. The consultation process that resulted in this throne speech is one example of that.

To encourage direct democracy, this session your government will act on recommendations of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, encouraging free votes on private members' bills, and proposing to double the amount of time devoted to private members and allow private members to co-sponsor bills. It will also increase the opportunity for citizen-led initiatives such as petition filing over the Internet. It will also hold provincial-regional cabinet meetings.

Your government is taking all possible measures to ensure Ontarians' safety and security, protect the province's economy and ensure the free flow of traffic and goods across our borders. That's why your government will continue to promote the development of a North American security perimeter.

Special teams have been established to combat organized crime. The government has provided funding to hire more than 1,000 new police officers and hired 165 probation and parole officers. Your government is committed to funding even more.

The OPP has a long-lasting tradition of helping countries in need, such as Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Our American friends have requested assistance in Iraq, and your government will work with the OPP to respond to this request.

Here at home, your government wants criminals to know that crime does not pay.

Ontarians deserve nothing less.

Your government believes that children, victims and other vulnerable people deserve special protection under the law. Those who would seek to harm the innocent deserve the strongest possible punishment.

That's why your government will fight child abuse, including increasing the front-line resources dedicated to fighting child pornography. It will also provide additional resources to rescue children from sexual exploitation, strengthen its high-risk offender strategy and try child exploitation cases in special courts as developed with the judiciary.

That's also why your government will support crime victims and fight crime by implementing call-monitoring and call-blocking services in provincial jails to prevent inmates from harassing victims or their families. It will expand community-based victims' services. It has strengthened the voice of victims through legislation that gives them the right to speak at parole hearings.

To better protect citizens and police, it will develop a package of reforms designed to effectively fight gun-related crimes.

To ensure that drunk and dangerous drivers are kept off our roads, your government will develop even stiffer penalties for drunk driving. It will introduce legislation that would impose lifetime licence suspension upon a second drunk driving conviction and direct vehicle seizure in appropriate cases.

Your government will also introduce a "lemon law" to protect those who purchase consumer goods from having to pay for costly, hidden defects. It will increase access to small claims courts to allow more citizens to have their concerns and complaints met.

However, strong communities are not held together merely by the force of law, but by everyday relationships between people.

Many Ontarians enjoy participating in artistic and cultural activities. Ontario's talented artistic community not only enriches us culturally, but helps to build strong communities. That's why your government will extend its highly successful arts endowment fund. It will also introduce a new initiative through the Ontario Arts Council to support new business growth and training in the arts.

Ontarians deserve leadership that considers the needs of citizens today, tomorrow and of generations into the future. They expect their leaders to not only understand the promise of Ontario, but to have a comprehensive plan for seeing that promise fulfilled.

Your government's Smart Growth plan marks the first time in decades that an Ontario government has put forward a comprehensive vision with the power to shape the lives of citizens 10, 20 and 30 years from now.

Smart Growth will encourage orderly, planned development, while protecting our natural environment and farmland. It will unlock gridlock, give people housing choices within walking distance of green spaces and

ensure that Ontario has the cleanest air and water in the world.

1650

Your government's five Smart Growth panels are made up of community leaders with expertise in a variety of areas ranging from the municipal sector, the environment, the development industry, transportation and the education community.

Your government has already received feedback from one of its panels and thanks the panel members for their vision and dedication, and will be working with panel leaders and citizens to carry out their vision of orderly local development. In the coming weeks, your government will announce the steps it will take to strengthen planning, transit, transportation and environmental protection.

Votre gouvernement sait bien que la prospérité n'est pas le fait du hasard. La création d'une économie robuste, la promotion d'un environnement sain et le développement de collectivités solides nécessitent une planification bien pensée et des investissements judicieux.

Notre réseau routier est un élément essentiel au bon fonctionnement de notre province. Il importe, en outre, de maintenir une circulation fluide et efficace pour faciliter la vie des personnes qui travaillent et de leur famille.

Your government understands prosperity doesn't happen by chance. Creating a stronger economy, promoting a healthy environment and building strong communities requires planning and smart investment.

Our highways are critical to our province's well-being. Keeping traffic moving smoothly and effectively is also important to workers and their families.

That's why your government will improve our transportation system—both public transit and highways—to help strengthen the economy and build stronger communities. Since 1995, your government has invested more than \$3.6 billion in public transit and \$7.5 billion in highways. While it continues to make record investments in public transit, your government encourages its federal counterparts to become full partners in Ontario's transit investment plan.

Your government is also preparing for the future by investing in municipal infrastructure. Over the next five years, it will contribute more than \$1.6 billion to help build the infrastructure rural communities need to support a growing economy.

Your government is committed to working with municipal governments to meet tough new standards for drinking water safety. It is committed to ensuring Ontario has the toughest standards in the world for safe, clean drinking water, that those standards are enforced and that all of Commissioner O'Connor's recommendations are implemented.

Your government recognizes the local challenges faced by some municipalities. It will work with them and the federal government to help municipalities meet their funding needs, guided by the principle of accountability and responsibility to taxpayers.



To help encourage development and growth in the north, your government has invested almost \$500 million since 1996 in over 1,400 northern Ontario heritage fund projects. These projects were also supported by nearly \$1.2 billion from municipal and private sector partners and will generate an estimated 17,750 new jobs.

Your government is committed to supporting scientific and technological research and innovation. Since the 1997 budget, your government has announced nearly \$4.2 billion in investments in science and technology, which are expected to leverage another \$5.2 billion from other partners for a total investment of over \$9.4 billion. By investing in research and development today, we can ensure that our young people enjoy a promising future, no matter where they live in Ontario.

Your government is committed to the creation of tax incentive zones that would encourage both large and small businesses to invest, relocate or expand in rural and northern communities. This will create economic growth and give young people the opportunity to remain in the communities where they grew up.

To help reduce infrastructure financing costs for municipalities, your government has developed municipal opportunity bonds. It will provide a \$1-billion capital injection to help kick-start the Ontario opportunity bonds program.

These bonds support your government's Smart Growth strategy for building a strong economy, vibrant communities and a clean, healthy environment. They will allow municipalities to borrow money at 50% below market interest rates, reducing the cost of municipal debt.

To keep Ontario beautiful and restore pride, your government will ensure provincial highways are maintained through regular grass cutting and a program to reduce litter. To better show this pride, it will beautify entry points into the province.

Your government will continue to protect Ontario's natural heritage through Ontario's Living Legacy program. It will introduce legislation to protect the Kawartha Highlands signature site and work to protect other sites such as the Lake Nipigon Basin.

To protect valuable and unique natural features, promote tourism and preserve Ontario's natural heritage for future generations, your government will create new tourism opportunities through the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. It will also help create the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area, the largest freshwater reserve in the world.

Your government believes that the promise of Ontario is reflected not only in what we are able to build, but also in what we choose to preserve.

Your government began its innovative throne speech consultation process with a simple goal in mind: to let the citizens of this great province guide its plans and priorities for the years ahead.

Over 10,000 Ontarians participated in that process, answering your government's invitation on-line, by fax, by mail and in person.

Your government has been guided by Ontarians. While it remains committed to making the tough decisions necessary to keep Ontario strong, it will also continue to follow the very simple four-step formula that has guided all of its decisions.

It will ask for citizens' input.

They will answer.

It will listen.

It will take action.

Your government believes this approach is the heart of democracy and the soul of leadership.

Only by working together can we realize the benefits of our strong economy, identify and invest in the priorities that matter and realize the promise of Ontario.

Ontarians have always known about that promise. They have seen it in our province's boundless natural resources; in its proud and productive industries.

In its strong social fabric.

Most of all, however, they have seen the promise of Ontario in each other.

In our children, whose lives will be shaped by strong schools, sheltered by safe neighbourhoods and surrounded by opportunity.

They have seen it in new immigrants to Ontario, who will find in this land of promise the security and bright future they seek.

In our seniors, whose experiences, sacrifices and wisdom guide us, our children and all the generations yet to come.

We have worked too hard and come too far to turn away from that promise now.

The promise of Ontario is ours. It guides your government as it makes its decisions. It guides the people of this province as they build a better and brighter future for all.

May God continue to bless Ontario and Canada.

May God guide all in public office, that they may use power wisely and well.

God save the Queen.

*Singing of O Canada.*

*His Honour was then pleased to retire.*

*Prayers.*

1700

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I beg to inform the House that, to prevent mistakes, I have obtained a copy of the speech from the throne, which I will now read.

**Interjections:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispense.

#### RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR MISSISSAUGA WEST

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of John Snobelen as member for the electoral district of Mississauga West, effective Monday, March 17, 2003.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SARS ASSISTANCE AND RECOVERY  
STRATEGY ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 SUR LA STRATÉGIE D'AIDE  
ET DE REPRISE SUITE AU SRAS

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 1, An Act to protect jobs, promote economic growth and to address the challenge of SARS in Ontario /  
Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à protéger les emplois, à  
promouvoir la croissance économique et à relever le défi  
posé par le SRAS en Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The New Democratic Party seeks unanimous consent that this bill be moved and voted upon for second and third reading without further debate. We've read the bill.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't have any difficulty. Technically, I think it's better if we use some phrasing that I have here, because you can drive a truck through some of this stuff. I appreciate that move by my friend from the third party.

I seek unanimous consent for the Speaker to immediately put the questions on second and third reading of Bill 1, without debate or amendment, and in the case of a recorded division on either of these questions, that there be no divisions bells.

**The Speaker:** Just to be clear, what the government House leader is seeking, along with concurrence, is unanimous consent for the Speaker to immediately put the question on second and third readings of Bill 1 without debate or amendment, and in the case of a recorded division on either of these questions there will be no division bells.

Agreed? Agreed.

SARS ASSISTANCE AND RECOVERY  
STRATEGY ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 SUR LA STRATÉGIE  
D'AIDE ET DE REPRISE SUITE AU SRAS

Mr Eves moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 1, An Act to protect jobs, promote economic growth and to address the challenge of SARS in Ontario /  
Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à protéger les emplois, à  
promouvoir la croissance économique et à relever le défi  
posé par le SRAS en Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

SARS ASSISTANCE AND RECOVERY  
STRATEGY ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 SUR LA STRATÉGIE  
D'AIDE ET DE REPRISE SUITE AU SRAS

Mr Eves moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 1, An Act to protect jobs, promote economic growth and to address the challenge of SARS in Ontario /  
Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à protéger les emplois, à  
promouvoir la croissance économique et à relever le défi  
posé par le SRAS en Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

## MOTIONS

## THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I move that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration Thursday, May 1, 2003.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** Mr Speaker, I believe I have consent to do some housekeeping issues that we dealt with today.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Murdoch and Mr Gill exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Murdoch assumes ballot item 7 and Mr Gill assumes ballot item number 1, and that Mr Murdoch and Mr O'Toole exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Murdoch assumes ballot item 43 and Mr O'Toole assumes ballot item 7, and that Mr O'Toole and Mr Guzzo exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr O'Toole assumes ballot item 2 and Mr Guzzo assumes ballot item 7.

**The Speaker:** Mr Stockwell seeks unanimous consent—

**Interjections:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.



**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I seek consent to revert to introduction of bills and that notwithstanding standing order 69(a), these bills be debated tomorrow during private members' public business.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (NO CONVEYING OF PASSENGERS FOR COMPENSATION), 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (AUCUN TRANSPORT DE PASSAGERS MOYENNANT RÉMUNÉRATION)

Mr Gill moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to restrict the conveyance of passengers for compensation / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour restreindre le transport de passagers moyennant rémunération.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** I do want to thank member Mr Bill Murdoch for giving me the opportunity to introduce the bill.

This bill, which I call the scoopers bill, if passed, will make it a provincial offence, levying heavy penalties under the Highway Traffic Act to, convey passengers anywhere in Ontario in a motor vehicle for compensation, unless the driver of the motor vehicle and its owner or lessee are licensed under a municipal bylaw.

### HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway / Projet de loi 3, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire l'utilisation de téléphones et d'autres équipements pendant qu'une personne conduit sur une voie publique.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Carried.

The member for a short statement.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I would like to indulge the attention of the House. There's such a cordial tone here today. Perhaps with good interest, there would be second and third reading at this time. Sensing that not being the case, I look forward to the debate tomorrow.

## SARS

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Although it has been referred to in the throne speech today, I would not feel good and I think it would be inappropriate for me to leave here today without sending, on behalf of my party and I'm sure the entire Legislature, our condolences to the survivors of the people who have died from SARS, and to thank the health professionals and the Toronto health department for the incredible work they've done during the terrible crisis in this city of ours. I just wanted to take the opportunity to do that.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I just need one more consent motion, basically to seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 1 and 2 be waived so that we can actually have private members' public business tomorrow morning.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

## VISITORS

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I know this is out of order and probably not usual, but I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to introduce in the House today Dr James Young and Dr Colin D'Cunha, who have represented this province—

*Applause.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1713.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	
<b>Baird, Hon / L'hon John R.</b> (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	
Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	Deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Beaubien, Marcel (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
<b>Brown, Michael A.</b> (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Bryant, Michael (L)	St Paul's	
Caplan, David (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
<b>Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary</b> (PC)	Oakville	Speaker / Président
<b>Christopherson, David</b> (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
<b>Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad</b> (PC)	Stoney Creek	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Cleary, John C. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
<b>Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony</b> (PC)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
<b>Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian</b> (PC)	Ottawa-Orléans	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Conway, Sean G. (L)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Cordiano, Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
<b>DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl</b> (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duncan, Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Opposition House leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	



Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
<b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet</b> (PC)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
<b>Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda</b> (PC)	Guelph-Wellington	Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance
<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
<b>Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
<b>Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug</b> (PC)	Northumberland	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Gerretsen, John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	
Gill, Raminder (PC)	Bramalea-Gore- Malton-Springdale	
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	
Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
<b>Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC)	Oxford	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Hastings, John (PC)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	
Hodgson, Chris (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
<b>Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim</b> (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
<b>Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen</b> (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
<b>Johnson, Bert</b> (PC)	Perth-Middlesex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kells, Morley (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	
<b>Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank</b> (PC)	Oak Ridges	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marland, Margaret (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martin, Tony (ND)	Sault Ste Marie	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Maves, Bart (PC)	Niagara Falls	
Mazzilli, Frank (PC)	London-Fanshawe	
McDonald, AL (PC)	Nipissing	
McGuinty, Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLeod, Lyn (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough- Aldershot	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
<b>Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R.</b> (PC)	Thornhill	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	



Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	
<b>Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan</b> (PC)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Durham	
<b>Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J.</b> (PC)	Oshawa	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	
Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Phillips, Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Sandra (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sûreté et de la Sécurité publique
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sampson, Rob (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Smitherman, George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	
Spina, Joseph (PC)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	
<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Peterborough	
<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	
<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.</b> (PC)	Markham	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
<b>Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	
<b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Wood, Bob (PC)	London West / -Ouest	
<b>Young, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Vacant	Mississauga West / -Ouest	

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

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## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 1 May 2003

Jeudi 1<sup>er</sup> mai 2003

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1<sup>er</sup> mai 2003

*The House met at 1000.*

*Prayers.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT  
(NO CONVEYING OF PASSENGERS FOR  
COMPENSATION), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT  
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE  
(AUCUN TRANSPORT DE PASSAGERS  
MOYENNANT RÉMUNÉRATION)

Mr Gill moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to restrict the conveyance of passengers for compensation /  
Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour restreindre le transport de passagers moyennant rémunération.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** It is my pleasure this morning, as the fourth session of this Parliament starts, to present the first bill. It's an honour for me and I do want to thank my colleagues who have given up their time to make sure that I'm able to present this bill. I'm delighted to have an opportunity to present this bill before this esteemed chamber.

Yesterday's speech from the throne laid the foundation for a continuation of the sound economic and job-friendly policy of Premier Mike Harris. This bill is a continuation of the common sense traditions of Premier Mike Harris and Premier Ernie Eves

Before I commence with the details of this bill, I would like to acknowledge the work of the members of this chamber in passing my private member's bill in 2001. I know you were a part of the meeting that day, Mr Speaker, proclaiming the month of May as South Asian Heritage Month. I would like to thank all my colleagues for their support in recognizing the contribution of South Asians in Ontario. This is an auspicious day, because today is May 1. I want to thank all the members, because they unanimously passed this bill. I'm looking forward to similar agreement on this bill as well.

The bill before the House this morning is about protecting Ontarians. It is very important for me to point out to my constituents and supporters that my presentation today could not have been possible without the support of my colleague from the PC caucus, the very honourable member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Mr Bill Murdoch. Thank you, Bill, for offering me your ballot item so that I could bring this bill forward today.

Mr Speaker, before I get into the details of this bill I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my colleagues from this side of the House, the hard-working MPP for Niagara Falls, Bart Maves, and the equally dedicated member for the proud riding Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Joe Tascona. I'm sure many of the members would be very happy to share my time, and I'm sure the opposition will be very happy to speak on this bill, because I know they all agree on how important this bill is.

This type of legislation is long overdue. When I was elected to this parliament on June 3, 1999, members of the taxi and limo association—many of them are my family members or friends—came to me and said, "We've been having this problem for the last 15 or 20 years." They've gone to the federal government, to the provincial government and to the municipal government and they've gone to the police services board, and nobody has done anything. I certainly took the lead, and I talked to the ministers and members at every level—I talked to the federal members as well—and I found out that it was a typical case of, "It's not my problem."

**Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre):** Passing the buck.

**Mr Gill:** Passing the buck, as Mr Sampson is saying. Nobody was willing to take on this task. People in my constituency and people who are affected by this problem on a day-in-and-day-out basis felt that not enough was being done. They certainly were looking forward to their member doing something for them. I was hoping this was going to be a government bill, but since it was not to happen, I was very happy to lead the charge and make this a private member's bill. I've had discussions with the opposition, with the third party and with federal members, and they all agree that they must pass this bill, and must pass it expediently.

I know the member opposite for St Catharines is saying it's this government. It's not this government. This problem has been going on for the last 15 to 20 years.

I'm pleased this morning that my esteemed, honourable friend the member from Owen Sound, Mr Bill

Murdoch, has given me the opportunity to take his time. As you know I've already had my time in terms of other bills, so he gave me his time to speak on this bill and bring this forward.

I'm happy to say that some of the people affected by this problem are in the members' gallery today, as well as in the visitors' gallery, and I want to welcome them.

**1010**

This bill, an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act, makes it a provincial offence to convey passengers anywhere in Ontario in a motor vehicle for compensation or to pick up passengers anywhere in Ontario for the purpose of conveying them somewhere in a motor vehicle for compensation unless the driver of the motor vehicle and its owner or lessee are licensed under a municipal bylaw passed under a section of the Municipal Act to convey passengers for compensation and the licences are displayed in or on the motor vehicle. The new offence does not apply to public vehicles operated under an operating licence issued under the Public Vehicles Act.

**Mr Sampson:** That's important.

**Mr Gill:** That's right; it's an important bill. Thank you, Mr Sampson.

If a person who is convicted of the new offence fails to pay the fine imposed on conviction, section 46 of the Highway Traffic Act provides that a direction may be made under section 69 of the Provincial Offences Act suspending the driver's licence of the person and directing that no driver's licence be issued to the person until the fine is paid. As you will agree, Mr Speaker, it's a very important bill, so we want to have heavy penalties.

In addition, if a person who is convicted of the new offence fails to pay the fine imposed on conviction, a direction may be made under section 69 of the Provincial Offences Act, refusing validation of the person's vehicle permit or issuance of a vehicle permit to the person until the fine is paid. The refusal to validate applies only to the permit for the vehicle involved in the commission of the offence by virtue of section 7.12 of the Highway Traffic Act and subsection 69(4) of the Provincial Offences Act.

Whenever a member introduces a private member's bill, many people seek to know what purpose it will serve. I'm sure that similar questions will come up today from the opposition. They should have brought this bill as well, since this affects everybody.

They wonder what the public good is. Is it a continuation of some old law, or will it make a difference? Well, let me be clear to those listening in the gallery and those watching at home: this bill is about safety; this bill is about security; this bill is about the enforcement of the law and the protection of the law-abiding citizens and visitors to our great province.

This bill makes scooping illegal. It prohibits unlicensed and uninsured taxi drivers from picking up passengers at airports or bus shelters in Ontario. In addition, this bill will end price gouging by the illegal taxi drivers, who are only too anxious to rip off innocent

passengers and visitors when they are visiting our fine province.

In terms of the SARS situation, which we have so eloquently handled—we had a standing ovation for Minister of Health Mr Tony Clement after he came back from Geneva, after opening up this province to visitors. It is even more important, in light of the SARS situation today, that we open up this province, that we have a great province to showcase to visitors to keep the economy going.

My bill is unique in Ontario. It gives teeth to the laws of our province. It takes leadership where the federal Liberals have been abandoning the people of Ontario.

**Mr Sampson:** Again?

**Mr Gill:** Again—over and over and over.

It also addresses an important demand from a list of stakeholders who have the best interests of Ontarians at heart. This includes stakeholders like the Peel Regional Police—they agree with this bill, and I have their endorsements—the Greater Toronto Airport Authority; the Commissionaires Great Lakes; the Airport Taxicab Association; the municipality of Toronto; the municipality of St Catharines; the town of Wainfleet; the municipality of Niagara Falls; and the municipality of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Mr Speaker, as you will agree and the members on the opposite side will agree, this is a great bill. I'm very happy that this is being discussed as the first item of the fourth session of this Parliament, and I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to present this bill as the first in this session.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** I am very anxious that we support our legitimate, licensed limousine and taxi owners and operators. They have a right to expect that when they go through all the process to become duly, legally entitled to run that business, they are not subject to people operating illegally, taking business that legitimately be theirs and essentially operating illegally.

I'm going to support this bill. I would say to the people in the audience that this is a government that's been elected for eight years. We are days, maybe a few weeks, away from an election, and the government has not brought forward legislation to deal with it. It is a private member's bill that I'm going to support. I hope the government has endorsed the bill and put their stamp of approval on the bill. In my opinion, if the government felt it was so important—and I think it's important—it should have been introduced as government legislation years ago. But here we have it today. As I say, I'm going to support the bill. I hope it will work. I hope that it doesn't penalize people who may be in car pools, who may be sharing gas money with people who drive them to and from work or school. I hope it's designed in a way that solves the legitimate problem of our legitimate business operators who have gone through all of the insurance, all of the licensing, all of the process to operate business legally. I hope this bill solves their problem,



because that's what I want. So I am going to support the bill.

The industry should recognize that we saw this bill this morning. With something this crucial, this important, frankly I would have expected the government to have dealt with it long ago, and in a more comprehensive fashion. But I'm going to support the bill.

I think one of the challenges we have here in the Legislature is that, as our enforcement agencies have less and less resources, we have to find ways to continue to uphold the laws using new approaches.

I'll give you an example. I always was hesitant about red light cameras because I felt they ran the risk of intrusion into private matters. But our police services simply do not have the resources to deal with red light runners on a regular basis. They have other, higher priorities. So I've come to support red light cameras.

I supported a piece of legislation in here from Mr Kells recently dealing with people who put up illegal signs on lawns and whatnot because we don't have the human resources to enforce it, and we do need to strengthen our laws.

Similarly, in this matter, as I said when I began my remarks, the people who are here in our gallery today and all of the people they represent have a right to expect that if they're going to follow the law and if they're going to do all that's required—licensing, making sure their transportation vehicles are safe, paying the very substantial insurance that I know they pay, the cost of licences, all of those things—they shouldn't be subject to somebody at an airport or elsewhere taking business from them, perhaps at a lower rate, because they're not paying the charges that these people face.

So I hope this piece of legislation solves the problem. I would feel far better if, rather than it being a private member's bill, the government had seen fit to put the priority on this that it should have and had included in government legislation something that had the stamp of approval from the ministry, that had been out for consultation with the public, and that we were confident would solve the legitimate problems, and solve them in a way that was legally enforceable.

As I say, I'm going to be voting in favour of this, and I hope it works. I think it's unfortunate it was not done in a different way.

1020

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** We're back. We were gone for 138 days, and we're back. Finally the Legislature's here. I know that people back home missed having us here. They wondered where their legislators were since Christmastime. They tuned into the parliamentary channel quite often, looked and said, "Where is the Legislature? Where is everybody?" I think most people are happy to see us back here. I just want to say to the government that I'm glad you finally got the courage to call the Legislature back so that there is some public scrutiny on public business. I look forward to, hopefully, your calling an election this spring so we can hold you up to a little bit more public scrutiny when it comes to your policies.

But we're here today to debate this particular bill, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. I just want to say upfront that we, as the New Democratic caucus of Ontario, support the bill. We think it's obviously something that makes some sense. But I find it a little bit passing strange that a Conservative backbencher in a Conservative government that has a mantra of having said, "We are the government of anti-government, and we are the government that wants to do away with regulation," is here trying to regulate yet another industry. I find the conversion that we've seen of the faith of the Tory caucus from 1995 to today somewhat interesting, and I think most Ontarians find it somewhat confusing, because most people understand, back in 1995—remember Mike Harris, the guy that used to be the leader of the Tory caucus; Mike Harris, the former Premier, who won an election in 1995, who came out of third place with his Common Sense Revolution and really had a hard edge to him? He said, "We are the government that's going there to fix government and dismantle government in many ways." He talked about how regulation was a bad thing and really had a big mantra about doing away with this interventionist approach of the Legislature when it comes to business and that we have to allow private sector individuals to find their own way in this economy. After all, you can't have business being bothered by pesky legislators, their pesky legislation and their pesky regulations. I find it somewhat interesting that we see these government backbench Tories coming into the House and saying, "We've got to regulate yet another industry." I think that's sort of like—well, I can't use the word because it would be unparliamentary, but certainly I can say it's passing strange.

I say to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale that maybe that explains what his political history was. We know originally he was a Liberal and didn't get the nomination. He ran for the Tories and finally got the nomination. Maybe he's going back to his old roots. I don't know. But finally somebody has come to their senses over there in the Tory caucus and recognized that there is a role for government and that government, yes, is about laws and regulation, not about onerous laws and onerous regulation but making sure that there are rules about how we conduct ourselves in our society when it comes to many of the activities that we do within a civilized society. This particular member says he understands that having unregulated taxis going out there and scooping fares from the licensed cab industry is a problem. It's a problem not only for the livelihood of honest, hard-working cab drivers in the province of Ontario but also could potentially be a safety problem when it comes to the unknowing public who may get scooped as a fare by one of these particular cab drivers.

I'm one who travels to Queen's Park. I take the TTC called Air Canada every week. My good friend Mr Bartolucci and other people out there such as Ms Martel and others who live away from Toronto fly into Terminal 1 at Pearson on a weekly basis when the House is sitting. You see it all the time, right? You walk through the

airport terminal and you see these scoopers standing there, willing to pick up fares and basically usher them away somewhere in the city of Toronto. I have always resisted because, first of all, I say to myself, "Is this person insured?" If something should happen and there's an accident, there's a large possibility that that scooper could be uninsured. If that was the case and an accident was happening, I'm really putting my future in that person's hands. I may have no recourse if there should be an accident or a fatality, namely mine. I wouldn't want that to happen, but what would my family do in regard to being able to go back when it comes to liability? At least we know that if we take one of the airport cabs in the city of Timmins, the city of Toronto or anywhere else, or we flag down a cab somewhere in the province of Ontario, if it has a bona fide cab licence in it, we know they're licensed and insured. That is an important thing for the consumer to know.

I find it interesting that at Terminal 1, however, scooping is allowed to happen. I've just got to say something on this for a couple of seconds. I often go to the commissionaires at the airport and say, "There are three scoopers inside, trying to steal the fares from these cabs out front which you haven't called." Do you ever notice that with members who come into Terminal 1 on a frequent basis, what you end up having—and my good friend M. Lalonde would know this coming from Ottawa into Terminal 2; you probably have the same thing—you'll go to get a cab, and the concierges, the security people, haven't called the cab into the queue so that you can come out the terminal and jump in right away? You'll say to yourself that there's a pound full of cabs, hundreds of them waiting for fares, waiting to get out there and service the public and make a few dollars for themselves and they haven't been called to the queue. Yet I see three scoopers at the airport, standing there, willing to take me and usher me away to the parking lot to get into their car. I have to ask myself the question, "Are the commissionaires in on it?"

We know in the city of Toronto, for example, it is a long-standing practice that doormen at large hotels like the Royal York have their preferred cab drivers. They basically call them and give them the better fares, and there's a little bit of payola that goes on within that arrangement.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** No.

**Mr Bisson:** Oh, we all know it happens. I've been told that some door people at the poshest hotels in Toronto can make \$200 to \$300 a day by referring business to a certain cab driver. I wonder if that practice happens with scoopers at the Toronto airport. I've raised it with the commissionaires and they assure me, of course, that it doesn't happen. I've also raised it with the RCMP when I'm there and they say, "Oh, don't worry, that doesn't happen." But I still ask myself the question, "Why are there no cabs in the queue at the airport when scoopers are available?"

I support the member's bill on the basis that it will hopefully deter people from trying to scoop fares from

legitimate cab companies and give some enforcement provisions to municipalities that choose to do something about it.

This is the other part: the enforcement. The unfortunate part about where we find ourselves with this bill, if it's passed, is who is going to be prepared to enforce it. Some municipalities don't take this issue very seriously and, even though they have enforcement provisions in this legislation, may not choose to enforce this particular provision. I hope that's not the case, because it is certainly an issue.

The other thing I want to come back to is this whole notion of where the member is going with regard to regulation. I've got to say again that it's very passing strange to have a Conservative member come to this House and introduce yet more regulation. You had a government under Mike Harris that said, "You know, I believe in less government; I believe in less red tape, less intervention in people's lives," and here you've got basically Tory backbenchers coming in and trying to regulate everything under the sun. So I think it's interesting. You have to ask the question, "Why is it that there's been this transition? Why is it that all of a sudden Tories have been coming forward in the last number of years, taking a different view?"

It's probably for a couple of reasons. I think one is because some of them have started to understand that there is a role for government, that we do need laws and regulations to regulate many aspects of our lives and it is not a bad thing. In fact, it's a necessary thing. But I think it also shows a change, a shift in direction on the part of the Ernie Eves government. I think under Mike Harris this type of bill was less likely to happen. Under Ernie Eves it's more likely to happen because Mr Eves is really trying to give distance between himself and the Mike Harris government, and I think—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** God, help; he's not just a Liberal. There are enough of you guys around as it is. We wouldn't want to have more. My, that would be a scary idea.

The point is—clearly, when you look at the throne speech from yesterday and you look at initiatives such as this, you say to yourself that here's a government that figures, finally, that they're in trouble in the polls and are going to have a difficult time trying to seek a third mandate, whenever they do go out to seek that particular mandate, and they're trying to paint themselves in a different image. It's rather interesting, because it seems that no matter what they try, the public ain't buying it. I think it's a little bit like a bad marriage. When people just don't love each other and people just don't get along, they can try to stay together as long as they will, but at the end of the day it ain't going to work. I think that's where the public is at when it comes to this government. It doesn't matter what they try at this point; yesterday in the throne speech there were a couple of items that I think were positive things, such as the increase in disability pensions, and free tuition for people trying to practise nursing in underserviced communities. There



were a couple of good things in that throne speech, marked with a number of bad things, I would say. But it doesn't matter what this government does, because I think people have made up their minds and that's about all.

1030

L'autre affaire qui est intéressante, c'est qu'on se trouve ici aujourd'hui dans la première journée de débat dans l'Assemblée après le discours du trône. Ça fait 138 jours que l'Assemblée n'a pas siégé et j'ai ici devant moi le Feuilleton et Avis de motions du gouvernement. Ce qui est vraiment intéressant, c'est ce qu'il n'y a pas dans ce feuilleton. C'est un gouvernement qui dit, « Écoute. » M. Eves était très clair depuis qu'il était parti en vacances au mois de décembre : « On va prendre une petite pause, on va aller s'organiser, on va essayer de trouver une nouvelle direction pour notre gouvernement. On va essayer de se réorganiser, de repenser, de changer de direction jusqu'à un certain point, et quand on reviendra au mois d'avril, on aura un grand plan pour la province de l'Ontario. Vous allez voir que nous, les Conservateurs, on a le boulot et on va être capable de s'organiser avec de bonnes initiatives pour la province. » C'était le discours de M. Eves. Intéressant.

Regardez ce qu'on a ici : l'avis des motions du gouvernement. Il y a un projet de loi, qui était passé hier par consentement unanime, par mon collègue M. Kormos sur la question du SRAS. Il n'y a pas d'autre projet de loi du gouvernement, aucun projet de loi du gouvernement sur le feuilleton. On a des avis qu'on va avoir des débats sur le discours du trône, sur la question du budget qui n'a pas eu lieu, que le gouvernement a fait chez Magna International. Mais il n'y a rien comme projet de loi sur le feuilleton. Je me dis, intéressant qu'un gouvernement qui nous dit au mois de décembre, au mois de janvier, de février, de mars, d'avril, quand on n'était pas ici à l'Assemblée, qu'ils étaient préparés à retourner au travail à la fin du mois d'avril et qu'ils avaient un gros agenda pour l'Ontario et qu'ils avaient de nouvelles solutions pratiques à proposer à la population qu'on s'organise, ne dit rien sur le feuilleton.

I know my colleague Mr Christopherson would want to say a few words on this particular bill. I'm looking for a nod.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** Sure.

**Mr Bisson:** He does, and at this point, now that he is here, I will cede the floor to my good colleague Mr Christopherson.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I am very pleased to join in the debate in support of the member Raminder Gill, from Mississauga. I know that this is also supported by the other members from Mississauga, with respect to ensuring that the licensing requirements are respected with people who do business in the airport area and also in the transit terminals.

The bill has been brought forth by the member. The process—it's obviously private members', so he's got a right to bring the bill forth—the process is it is going to be debated here in the Legislature; it will be voted on in

the Legislature. The member at that particular point in time, in terms of the normal process, would ask that this be put to a standing committee for fuller discussion with respect to public input. That's the process that is envisioned. I am not disappointed, like the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, with respect to this process. This is why we have private members'. This an issue that is important to Raminder Gill and what he thinks is important for his area.

I was looking at an article that was in the paper with respect to the MPP vowing action on taxi scoopers. That is the title of the article and that is what we are dealing with today. It is a bill that is targeting individuals who are not doing business in a licensed capacity. The amendment to the Highway Traffic Act would make it an offence to transport passengers for compensation without being licensed in the municipality. If you are going to do business in a municipality, you should be licensed like any other business operator. You shouldn't be able to have an unfair advantage where other people who are doing business are licensed. They're paying their dues with respect to being able to do that business. If you want to be in that business, you should also be paying the licence fees to make it a level playing field.

Currently taxi operators, known as scoopers, face a maximum \$70 trespassing fine for snatching fares from licensed vehicles that pay up to \$4,800 a year to work the lucrative airport beat—that's the Pearson International. The scoopers often overcharge and double fares. According to this article in the Toronto Star dated August 21, 2001.

The proposal—  
*Interjection.*

**Mr Tascona:** The Toronto Star does get it factually correct at times. Obviously with Mr Gill's bill, they are certainly being factual.

Under the proposed bill, if fines go unpaid, authorities would be able to suspend the driver's licence until they are paid, and repeat offenders could have their taxi permits suspended. To date, the proposed amendment has the support of the Greater Toronto Airport Authority, taxi and limousine drivers' associations and several Peel-area MPPs. I notice Minister DeFaria has entered the chamber and I know that he's very supportive of this piece of legislation.

I would say that there are avenues and areas of the bill that are bringing stiffer penalties. For example, offences and penalties: it has on first conviction a fine of not less than \$305 and not more than \$500, and on each subsequent conviction a fine of not less than \$500 and not more than \$5,000.

The intent here is to put individuals on notice that they need to be licensed. That's all we're talking about here: be licensed, respect the rights of the owner of the premises with respect to who is going to pick up passengers and drop off passengers. If they're going to do that for compensation, then obviously they should be licensed and respect the laws of the municipality.

I think the member has worked very hard on this bill. He should be commended for the hard work that he's

done, a lot of work to get stakeholder support, which is to be commended. So obviously the public is aware of this and he is aware of their concerns in putting together the bill.

I'm very pleased to have spoken on the bill and I support it.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm simply pleased that the Ontario Legislature is back in session. The people at home were turning on the channel looking for the Ontario Legislature. They saw that the federal House was in session since January. When I explained to people in St Catharines and Niagara that the Ontario Legislature had not sat since December 12, 2002, and that the first question period would be May 1, 2003, they were astounded and appalled at the thumbing of the nose at democracy by the Ernie Eves government. I'm sure they are pleased that the Legislative Assembly is back in session now so that legislation of this kind can come forward.

I thought perhaps there would be a bill banning government advertising. I know you can't use props but I thought I would just hold this up. Every day there is a pamphlet showing up at the house which is clearly partisan; you turn on your television set and there are partisan ads being paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario; you turn on your radio and there are partisan ads; you open the newspaper and there are partisan ads—all paid for by the grateful taxpayers and extolling the virtues of the Conservative government.

I think that Ernie Eves—and he has the money—should, on behalf of the Conservative Party, sign a cheque paying for all these ads that are clearly partisan, that are clearly in violation of even the weak Management Board guidelines that we have here. I know that this is very concerning to many people in this province and I thought the bill might be on that, but it's not.

I want to say to the member that I happen to agree with this bill. I think it has to go to committee because, as some people have mentioned, there's a problem if you have a carpool and people are sharing in the costs of the carpool.

We want to ensure, first of all, that we have qualified drivers who have a good driving record; second, that there is proper insurance; third, that the vehicles are in proper, safe condition—I think those are very important—and that those who are in the taxi business or the limousine business meet all of the qualifications, stipulations, regulations and legislation that is imposed upon those who are a legitimate business. Sure you can give a ride for a much lower price if you're prepared to not meet all those obligations, but the legitimate businesses out there have to meet those obligations. That's why I think it's important that this legislation, in a modified form perhaps, pass the Legislature at third reading.

1040

I'm glad I heard in the speech from the throne that now the votes on private members' bills are going to be free votes. For all my years in the Legislature I thought they were all free votes. I found out that the government, through the whip on the government side, was making

government members vote in a certain way. Now I see in the speech from the throne that's not going to be the case, and that there will be twice as many opportunities to present these bills, which means of course twice as many opportunities for the government to deep-six these bills, to make sure they get nowhere if they don't want the bill to proceed.

This bill is one that I am certainly prepared to support. I think that for the safety of passengers out there, it's important. For fairness to those who are under regulations and legislation and policy obligations, the bill should pass. I'm glad to see that the member who presents the bill, Mr Gill, who once ran for the federal Liberal nomination in his riding and was not successful in that case, has finally been able to get this issue before the House, because his government certainly wouldn't bring it before the House.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It's indeed my pleasure, as usual, to support my colleague Mr Gill. He is always working to recognize important issues to his constituents and, in a broader sense, to the people of Ontario. It's his reasonableness and fair-mindedness that I've always strongly supported.

I would say that I was first impressed with Mr Gill when he quite respectfully asked me to speak on South Asian Heritage Day. Now he's giving me a note that he actually doesn't want me to speak on this. But I do support it and I'm just going to be on the record as supporting it. Thank you, Mr Gill. I think Mr Galt wanted to speak, but he isn't here.

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** I stand in support of this legislation and compliment my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for bringing it forward.

I don't often get the chance in this place to talk about the fact that I'm the son of a truck driver. I take a lot of taxis—fewer airline limousines than taxis—but in my downtown riding I take advantage of taxis, and I'm of the opinion that taxi drivers and truck drivers are among the hardest-working people I know. Many of the people who have joined today to show their support for this legislation are among those workers in our society who, in order to eke out a living, are asked to work a lot of hours. So I support this legislation.

The issue of scooping is a practice that I've seen occur too many times. When I'm at Pearson, usually to pick friends up at the airport and the like, I go out of my way to instigate a debate with those people I see doing it. I think it's a repugnant tactic that needs to be cracked down upon, and that's why I'll be supporting this legislation.

It doesn't only occur, as many people will know, at Pearson. Union Station is in my riding, and Union Station is another place where these kinds of devils work to scoop off the legitimate fares that would otherwise go to people who are paying pretty extensive licensing fees and pretty extensive insurance fees as well to operate their small businesses on wheels in our fair cities and jurisdictions. It's for these reasons that I'm inclined to offer support for this legislation.



At the same time, I think it would be appropriate to point out that legislation like this has been passed before but not brought forward to the point where the government saw it move forward as a piece of legislation. I would say to members who are here to offer support to Mr Gill that they might want to press him just a little bit harder to get his government not only to allow him the prominent position of having this bill debated as the first bill after we returned from our rather extensive Christmas holiday, but that they might actually move forward with it and give delivery to their good symbolism associated with the first order of business.

I think for people who have had a chance to take a look at the bill as it's currently worded, there are some challenges with it, some challenges, as an example, that might limit the ability of people trying to arrange car pools to receive some compensation for the expense associated with being the primary vehicle operator. I don't think it was the intention to scoop up people in that kind of circumstance. I think of a place like York University. We know it's a university that's highly dependent upon 905-area students, and parking on site at York University is brutal. Public transit access, although minorly enhanced by GO Transit in recent years, is still very poor. We need to be able to encourage solutions like car pooling to make it more accessible. This bill does provide some constraint around that. It's the kind of thing we can deal with in committee—members working together in good faith—but the bill as currently written does pose some difficulties that way.

The last point I would want to put on record is that I do think we have an issue with respect to licence holders versus operators. I'm a little more familiar with the circumstance as it relates to taxis in the city of Toronto than I am with the circumstance related to airport limousines. One of the great frustrations I've seen is that over time in our city of Toronto, we've done a much better job of enriching the licence owner than we have the person who puts in more hours than we care to imagine behind the wheels of vehicles providing services.

I'm one of those who is always going to be on the side of supporting the right and the capacity of people who are behind the wheel to make a better living, because truck drivers and taxi drivers, people who, as I said at the beginning, are amongst my heroes and the hardest working—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Further debate?

**Mr Christopherson:** I appreciate the opportunity to take a couple of minutes, literally, to comment on Bill 2, tabled by my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Like my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, I also will be supporting this bill. I think it's an important measure.

I spent some time when I was on Hamilton city council as chair of the Hamilton licensing committee, and regulating the taxicab industry is an important part of what a municipal licensing committee does. I want to say to anybody who thinks that unless you're in the industry, you understand it, you're kidding yourself. It's a very

complex industry with many different factors that can affect, quite frankly, the ability of a community to provide transportation infrastructure, as well as for people to earn a decent living, and it's tough work.

The reason we need to do this, in my opinion, is—the first thing is to identify: does something need to be regulated? Is it in the public interest? Is there a safety issue? If you determine that, yes, it's in the best interest of the public or the participants of an industry to be regulated, then the next step is to make sure that there's adequate enforcement, for the simple reason that if you don't, then you get into the situation where—and members of this House will know—there is construction taking place in Ontario that's practically regulating itself. Unless we're in there forcing them to follow the rules—and often, yes, those rules mean you've got to spend a few bucks. But unless we're in there enforcing those rules, what it means is those who break the law and don't follow the rules make more money because they don't have these expenses and they're able to undercut legitimate members of that particular aspect of our economy. This is the same thing. If we have determined as a society in Ontario that we want to give municipalities the power to regulate, then we need to make sure there's enough provincial teeth in the enforcement that violating the rules doesn't just become a licence to do business: pay the fine and call it a cost of doing business. It's got to be tough enough to deter. It's also got to be broad enough to make sure that everybody is involved, so that no one is taking advantage of the system and, quite frankly, ripping off legitimate participants in the taxicab industry.

So I'm very pleased that the honourable member has brought this forward, and I will be equally pleased to lend my support and vote to his Bill 2.

#### 1050

**Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio):**

Thanks very much for the opportunity to respond to one of the earlier bills brought before the House and to compliment Mr Gill, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, for looking out for his constituents and being aware of the issue in his riding. Certainly only a very small number of us get to have big airports in their riding. As a matter of fact, after the next boundary change, I'll have an airport every bit as big, being that the one in Trenton, or now Quinte West, will actually become a part of my riding. As a matter of fact, I'm very enthused to be able to welcome the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, Ernie Parsons, into my riding with these new boundary changes as one of my constituents. I certainly look forward to that.

Getting around to speaking specifically on the bill that the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has brought in, I see this as an issue of safety. I also see it as an issue of being attractive to visitors to our country, particularly when it comes to tourism.

I've travelled in many other countries where the culture is very different, and as I have been picking up my bags, there has been somebody at my elbow who for X number of pesos or lire or whatever the money hap-

pened to be in that country would take you to the hotel, and meanwhile the official ones are outside. They are there to "scoop," to take advantage of someone new in their country, where you don't really understand the rules and regulations, you don't really know what the cost is, you have no idea of how far it is from the airport to the city.

As a matter of fact, I landed in one country and it turned out that we landed on an island and we had to go by ferry. When I asked about a taxi, they just sort of laughed. I looked out the door and could see, obviously, what the problem was. It was actually a fair distance on a ferry.

So it's this kind of thing, when you land in a foreign country and you may be taken advantage of because people are there trying to scoop up, trying to make a buck on the side, so to speak.

There is also the safety issue. These people who may be giving this so-called cut-rate fare, who are trying to get a fare from you, may not have proper insurance. If anything should happen, of course, you as an occupant, as a visitor to this country or even returning home and not quite understanding what's going on, might not have a fair amount of coverage.

We might talk about price gouging going on here. I'm sure many of the members in this House have been on a trip someplace and have been offered a side trip which is so much, and then you start finding out that they have things to add on. There are tolls on bridges or there's so much for gas or so much because the car is a different vintage or so much because it's an extra few minutes over what was originally negotiated. They have these add-ons, and you feel that you're really caught. I can see that happening in this situation, that they make an agreement at the airport, so much to go downtown, but then they say, "Well, downtown started over here and you're going to have to pay the extra to get all the way." I see that kind of thing as an issue, as a problem. With the present industry, the rate is set and you know where you're at, that when you get into that licensed vehicle it's going to be X number of dollars. You may disagree with the amount. It may be more than you think it's really worth or really should be charged, but you know exactly where you are at when the rate has been set.

I see it combined here, having some assurance and insurance for the person who's at the airport, whether they be a Canadian or a visitor to our country, and I think it's important that we provide that.

The current tourism industry is having a real struggle. First the Americans weren't too happy with Canadians because our federal government wouldn't stand behind our American friends; some 40 other countries would, but not so our federal government. They've stood behind us in thick and thin and have been very, very supportive of us, particularly on the security of our nation. Then, after we sort of get the Americans upset with us and get a lot of contracts cancelled—and a lot of people who were wanting to come to my area on vacation this summer have cancelled for that reason—we have the SARS outbreak and the difficulties with that. That's affecting

tourism. And it's not only affecting tourists coming here and people who might be using these vehicles. For example, Trinity College in my riding has just been told by people in Switzerland not to come over because of SARS here in Ontario. I think that's extremely unfortunate, and I believe our medical officer of health will be able to get that sorted out.

These are some of the things our tourism industry is struggling with right now, and they don't need to have this problem at the airport that has been brought to our attention by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Often when you arrive in a country, the very first exposure you have to that culture, to that society and to those people is your ride from the airport. If that's a bad message, if that's a bad image, you're left with a very bad taste in your mouth as to everything about that country. You only have one opportunity for a first impression. You do not have a second opportunity to make a good first impression, and this is the individual, the person who's driving that vehicle that may be unsafe, or it may be a situation of price gouging that is occurring.

So I certainly support the member in bringing forward this particular bill, because with the position we're in with tourism right now I think anything we can do to promote and enhance the image of the province of Ontario, and in particular Toronto because of the SARS incident—it's well under control, and my compliments to Dr Colin D'Cunha and to Dr James Young. They are two people who are exhausted, who have worked extremely hard over the last two months. Because of them and with their leadership, working with the Honourable Tony Clement, our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, this SARS incident has come under control, no thanks to our federal government, which has taken some two months to get around to photocopying a form that people could fill out prior to getting on an airplane coming to this country. You would have thought the least they could do would have been to photocopy a few sheets of paper and have proper screening of people coming to this country. But no, they sat back and waited. I find that extremely unfortunate. Maybe in June they'll get these machines, heat-imaging systems that can screen people as they get off airplanes to see if they're running a temperature. I think that's unfortunate.

Also, the federal government should have been in Geneva this week, should have been over there getting the World Health Organization to lift the sanction on Ontario, on Canada. But they were missing. The light was out; they just weren't at home. Who had to go? We had to send the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to do a job that the federal government should have been doing.

This is all about tourism. It's all about people being properly looked after when they arrive in our country, when they're on our doorstep, and giving a very positive, upbeat message to them. As long as this kind of situation that our member has brought before us is going on, we're not going to enhance the image of tourism. So I really



compliment the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for bringing this forward, for recognizing the difficulties that he is having at the airport in his riding and supporting the people from his community.

**The Acting Speaker:** In response, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

1100

**Mr Gill:** I do want to thank all the members who spoke so eloquently, especially members from my caucus, in support of this bill. Everybody has recognized that it's an important bill. It's long overdue. In fact, as I mentioned in my preamble, ever since I came on the scene on June 3, 1999, people in my constituency who are affected by this problem of scoopers have come to me and said they've talked to every other level of government, including the provincial governments before, the NDP and the Liberal, and the federal government for the last umpteen years. By umpteen, I mean at least 10 to 15 years. They came to me and I said, "You know, if the government is not willing to do it, then as a private member I'm going to bring it forward. I'm going to make sure that the voices of the people who are my friends, who are my family, who are the great, hard workers of this province"—these are the people, along with many of us and many other people, who are making this province the best place in the world to live, work and raise our families, which is Ontario.

I'm very, very pleased that today is the South Asian Heritage Month. Many members opposite, even right now while they should be here debating this bill, are out there, not even recognizing that I brought forward the South Asian Heritage Month, talking about how wonderful the South Asian community is, and that is true. But I hope they give some credit to me, because I brought forward that bill.

I'm very happy to acknowledge some of the members who are here today who are affected by this bill, and they're looking forward to the resolution: Mr Gursharan Singh Puar, Swarn Singh Karron, Mann Singh Aulakh, Bhupinder Singh Gill, Bhupinder Singh Dhillon, Gurmej Singh Dhillon, Daljinder Singh Puar, Gurmeet Singh, Karam Singh Punia, Tehal Singh Thabal, Jaswinder Brar, Khushwinder Gill and Nick Dhaliwal.

**The Acting Speaker:** This completes the time allocated for this ballot item. I will place the question to dispose of this matter at 12 o'clock noon.

# HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2003 LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

Mr O'Toole moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway / Projet de loi 3, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire l'utilisation

de téléphones et d'autres équipements pendant qu'une personne conduit sur une voie publique.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** The member has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It is indeed my pleasure. In fact, I've been waiting for a number of days to get back to the Legislature to bring this important issue before the House once again. For those viewing and listening today, I'd like to remark at the beginning that our Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Frank Klees, is here, and he is listening. I know he is interested in this important issue, because it's about the broader issue of road safety on our provincial highways, which is a top priority with Minister Klees.

I'm also impressed with the list of people who have sought me out to speak on this bill, including Joe Tascona, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. He seldom speaks on private members' business. He is a person whose voice I want on the record; also Toby Barrett of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. He is from southwestern Ontario, as you know, and drives a lot. He's also a person who has taken some interest in the statistics part of the issue of accidents on our public roadways. And of course the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mr Miller, who has actually doggedly been after me to speak on this bill because he takes a great interest in road safety, as he also commutes from northern Ontario, or the near north, if we'd call it that.

In the interest of those viewing, this bill was discussed in the House, as you might know, and passed second reading. When the House was prorogued, the bill was dropped from the order paper, obviously. But that bill had passed under some scrutiny at that time. We worked with staff in the Ministry of Transportation as well as with legislative counsel staff to improve the bill. I want to bring to the attention of those who have been following this that the bill has been strengthened. The bill has been strengthened in the following ways since the second reading in the last session.

It now bans all novice drivers from using cellphones at any time while operating a motor vehicle—these are the GIs, the progressive driver licensing system we have in Ontario—whether they use hands-free devices or not. So persons without experience would be prohibited from using electronic devices while driving. I think it's the driver distraction issue that you will hear repeated throughout the debate this morning.

The second improvement allows the Minister of Transportation, Mr Klees, to add visual devices.

*Interruption.*

**Mr O'Toole:** Pardon me. I have to turn this off. They are very distracting, as you can see—the Sergeant at Arms here is going to come and take the phone—but it was for demonstration purposes only. I commit to you that it won't happen again, but it does demonstrate how it does intrude into our space. As long as he doesn't take it—

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** No, you're not getting it, Wayne. Give it to me afterwards. That's a very important thing: you

can't disagree with the Sergeant at Arms here. You can actually be arrested. You'll be charged with failing to yield your cellphone.

Actually, one of the persons who has been watching this phoned me. Probably the cellphone companies were calling me to say, "Stop. Stop now."

I will demonstrate the number of electronic devices. This device here, Mr Speaker, you'd know, is not on and Wayne won't take this one. It is actually a personal data device, and that device allows you to—this is interesting. I'd like everyone to pay attention a little more closely. I could actually e-mail Europe and Australia from here. I would never do that, because that isn't allowed in the House. But, for instance, I could receive an e-mail from my daughter in England right now. In fact, I think I did get one this morning. This is growing. In fact, this device is now available in your car. So really, I'm talking about electronic devices, and what I'm suggesting is that the Minister of Transportation, through regulation, would be able to add and delete devices that would keep our roads safer. That's all technology.

We all know, if we're paying attention, about OnStar systems within cars—very convenient. They're hands-free; they're voice-activated. They're very much a safety aid in the car—someone who's lost, someone who's in need of aid, an accident. These devices are the leading edge of safety in the vehicle. There are other technologies, but OnStar is the preferred one at the moment.

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean):** General Motors.

**Mr O'Toole:** General Motors happens to be a leader in the auto industry, and I respect them for that.

I would say the last amendment that we made is to address recommendations that I heard throughout the extensive consultations I've had on this bill—consultations with the Ontario Safety League as well as with the police chiefs and the police associations. I know some of the other speakers will be putting some of that information on the record.

But the broader issue with which I'm challenging the members here today, specifically the Minister of Transportation, is that in driver tests we address the issue of driver distraction. Driver distraction is the multi-tasking that I see every day as I drive to Queen's Park from my riding in Durham, which, by the way, is a terrific riding. During that drive, I see people having toast and coffee, doing their hair, reading the paper, reading a book. In fact, I was speaking yesterday after the throne speech with Chief Fantino of the Toronto police and he said to me the worst case—Mr Smitherman, you should pay attention. Chief Fantino is watching and he supports this bill. He said to me the worst case he has seen is a person driving a Land Rover down Bay Street with two cellphones. I wouldn't misquote Chief Fantino.

I was also speaking yesterday with the commissioner of the OPP, Gwen Boniface, and I asked her views on this bill. So I have consulted from the top to the bottom, and that would include Mr Smitherman. But I would say that the quotes I'm most enthralled with are working with

my own constituents, and in that case I must put on the record Chief Kevin McAlpine from the Durham Regional Police. This is his quote: "Driving is a full-time responsibility that requires total concentration. We certainly support any move that enhances a driver's ability to concentrate by reducing the number of distractions inside the vehicle." It is a driver's decision when, where and how to use any of these devices, whether it's a radio or, indeed, interacting with people in the vehicle.

The second person is Frank Murphy, the executive director of the Head Injury Association of Durham Region. Frank says, "... we strongly oppose the use of cellphones while driving; and, subsequently, we support legislation that means to control cellphone use in cars."

Clearly, I would say that we've had support across the region. In fact, I would say we've had support across the sectors.

Udo Rauk, of Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, says, "We congratulate you on your effort to focus on driver distractions and to identify preventative measures for safety and security for drivers/passengers of motor vehicles."

**1110**

I'd have to say that I'm interested in the debate this morning and in clearly asking for your support, because I hear on a daily basis from the drivers in the province of Ontario. I can tell you they overwhelmingly support measures that will improve road safety. At the very top of their list they put the use of cellphones while driving as generally inappropriate. They also quickly acknowledge that having a cellphone in the vehicle while travelling alone—perhaps younger people needing to access instructions on how to get to a destination or to access safety support on the road. There is appropriate time for their use, and I guess my advice to the people is to reduce the distractions in the driver's space. That would include all distractions: road signs, multi-tasking, coffee, arguing with someone else in the car, trying to correct the dog that's barking in the back seat—any of these distractions you have to respond to.

I believe the current tools that are available to the police are too restrictive, and I would say there has been no evidence that the courts have upheld the careless driving charge, which carries with it a significant fine as well as six points. I'm asking for your support this morning. I believe it's the right thing to do to keep our roads safer in the province of Ontario.

I know there was a very serious incident in the riding of Durham the last time I introduced this bill in the House. A young man and his young daughter were tragically killed, and from that there was an inquest. Officer Stone, it was reported at the inquest, said he would like to support the reduced use of cellphones while operating a vehicle. Out of respect for that family, and for all families that are affected by this, this is the right thing to do.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's):** I'm going to be sharing my time with the members for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, St Catharines and Hamilton East.



I'd like to say, off the top, our condolences to the family who suffered this tragedy. But I just don't think this legislative response is the way to go.

I find it passing strange that this bill is being introduced by a Conservative member. This is the kind of regulation that Conservatives ordinarily have great trouble with. If you look at the distractions that are out there causing accidents, cellphones are way down the list. I say to the member opposite, what's next? A ban on Big Macs in the driver's seat? Obviously not. The major distractions in the car—you can get a television in your vehicle now—are radios, Walkmans, somebody else in the car. The statistics show us that those are the distractions in the car, and the major distractions are outside the car. It's not the interior distractions but the exterior distractions. Everybody who drives down the Gardiner Expressway and sees some of those advertisements knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Cellphones are very much a safety device, a way in which we can assist police and emergency workers—to tip them off as to accidents that are out there in the streets—and are very much of enormous assistance to working families leading just-in-time lives. At the end of the day, I don't think this will make our streets safer. Moreover, I'm concerned that once we head down this path, what other particular activity is going to be targeted by this government?

Again, I'm convinced that the Conservatives' answer to gun control is cellphone control. Conservatives tell me that guns don't kill people; people kill people. Well, it's people who cause accidents, and it requires education and incentives and assistance from government and industry to reduce these accidents. This industry in particular has bent over backwards to assist governments and the public in educating the public and encouraging safe cellphone use.

Conservatives also say, "Don't punish law-abiding gun owners by restricting their use." In this case, Conservatives are not only punishing responsible users of cellphones; they are just outright eliminating the use and eliminating all those opportunities for the safe and positive use of cellphones.

I can't support this. I think this government has to work better with the industry to educate people, to ensure that cellphones continue to be a safety device on the streets. If we're going to tackle the distractions, let's tackle the distractions outside the car and the real distractions in the car and not get bogged down with this particular effort.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Timmins-James Bay.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Our caucus is growing, Mr Speaker. Do you see that? It's growing right before my eyes. Oh, it's leaving. Thanks for the visit.

**Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** Easy come, easy go.

**Mr Bisson:** Who says you can't have fun in the Legislature of Ontario? It's a wonderful place. We're very

privileged individuals, being elected by our constituents to be here to represent them and do all the fine work we all do in the name of our constituents. Sometimes there actually are some funny moments in this House, and we just saw one.

Anyway, we had this debate last fall. Do you remember what happened? We debated this, we supported it, the House voted on it, we all said yes. I don't think anybody voted against it last time. Am I correct in saying it was unanimous? I'm just looking for the member across the way. It was unanimous last time, wasn't it? There were some people who voted against it? OK. I was a bit surprised.

Anyway, the point is, the majority of people in the House voted in favour of this bill and the bill was referred to committee, which is something we don't see too often around here. The bill actually got referred to the general government committee. It was sent there on October 17 last year. Guess what happened? Nothing.

**Mr Bryant:** What? They killed it?

**Mr Bisson:** Nothing happened. The government never even called it for debate in the committee. It was referred to committee on October 17. We had an opportunity to deal with this bill at committee level, but the government never chose to call the bill before the committee. So you've got to ask yourself: what's this exercise all about? I thought we debated this last year, and when we voted at second reading and this thing got passed, I expected that the government was going to deal with the bill because it's an important issue. I think it doesn't go as far as it needs to, as my good friend pointed out earlier, but it is a step in the right direction. It was sponsored, I think, by the esteemed Mr O'Toole as well. He's supposedly a heavyweight in his caucus, I'm told.

**Mr Bryant:** You can see that.

**Mr Bisson:** You can see by the people who are here now. The government didn't call it forward. So you've got to ask yourself: how heavy is that weight across the way? Not very heavy, because they never—

**Mr Guzzo:** You guys blocked it. Who blocked those committees?

**Mr Bisson:** Oh, we blocked the committees. Give me a break. You guys changed the rules in this House. We couldn't block a committee if we tried. My God. I go to House leaders' meetings every week. What are you talking about? My Lord. We're reverting over here to voting—never mind; I'm not even going to go there.

I believe this is a good initiative, but I have to ask myself: how sincere is the government in dealing with this issue? We voted on this at second reading last fall. Members in good faith engaged in debate and brought forward their ideas about how the bill could be made better. We all concede the point that every bill that comes before this House is never perfect, but at least this bill was a step in the right direction. We supported, by majority of the House, the bill that was put forward last fall by Mr O'Toole. We voted. We even voted to refer it to committee, and the government chose to do nothing with it.

You have to ask yourself what happened. Was Mike Harris then the Premier of Ontario? Maybe Mike didn't want it to happen? No. Last time I checked it was EE, Ernie Eves, who was the guy in charge last fall. Why is it that it wasn't called forward? Why was nothing dealt with?

We know that the province of Newfoundland has dealt with this particular issue. I think they're the first jurisdiction in Canada to bring forward such legislation. I would hope that Ontario, being the largest province with the most motorists and probably the heaviest proliferation of cellphones in Canada, would want to do something similar. But the government chose not to call the bill forward before the committee, and by not doing that, allowed the bill to be passed.

1120

So I say to the member across the way, I'll go through the exercise again. I'll support your bill. But I want to know how sincere your government is in wanting to make this thing happen. I'll just say I'm a little bit pessimistic because they had the chance last fall to pass this bill. In all likelihood, we're here for about two weeks. If you get a little bump in the polls, we'll probably be out in the election. I suppose this is an attempt on the part of Mr O'Toole—and God rest his soul, we all have to advocate for the issues that we think are important to us, and I know he's doing this for all the right reasons—but this is an attempt for him to say, "I'm back at it again, and I'm the guy who's going to basically run my whole campaign this spring on banning cellphones out of those cars in Oshawa."

So I say to the member across the way, I'll support it, but I'm not very confident that the government ain't going to sit here long enough for it to pass. There will be a change of regime. As we liked to say this winter, change of regime has been a very big line used by other people around the world, so maybe we should use it here. We're going to have a regime change in Ontario in the next election and in all likelihood this government, or should I say this regime, is not going to have an opportunity to deal with this particular bill.

Or maybe—maybe—the government ain't going to call an election. Now that brings me to the second part of my debate. What happens if they don't call an election this spring and decide to go till this fall or next spring? What gives me the confidence—and I ask Mr O'Toole this question directly—to believe that the government is going to deal with this bill any more seriously than it dealt with it last fall?

I need to have an answer to that question. It's not a vote-getter for me, Mr O'Toole. I'm going to support it no matter what you say because I think it's a step in the right direction. But I want you to answer that question. I think we in the Legislature and, more importantly, the public of Ontario, have to have an answer to that question. If you got this passed last spring, and the government chose not to make it law, what makes you think you have any confidence that your government will do so, should they not call an election within the next two weeks?

Now, on to the bill—

**Mr Guzzo:** Didn't you hear the throne speech?

**Mr Bisson:** What throne speech? I sat here for 45 minutes yesterday. I read the lines as the Lieutenant Governor was reading them. I was looking for new initiatives. Ernie Eves said, "I need a big long break because we have to go back and regroup. We're going to come back with this big agenda, and we're going to have all these new ideas for the people of Ontario."

I thought I'd fallen and gone to sleep a year ago and listened to the budget statement of last year, because most of what was in that throne speech was stuff that was talked about last year. Seventy percent of it was old stuff, so there wasn't a throne speech in the way that I understand them in this place. This was a pre-election document; that's the way I saw it.

Anyway, to the cellphone issue. I have to agree with the member: this is an issue. It really is. We're all guilty, I think, in this Legislature. At least I'll speak for myself; I won't say to other members that they've done it. But I've done it. I've got my cellphone. It's turned off. It's a PalmPilot, Wayne. But I've brought this in just to show it. It's turned off. I promise it's not going to ring.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Is that legal in here?

**Mr Bisson:** It's only a prop. Can I have unanimous consent just to use this as a prop?

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Bisson has asked for unanimous consent to use the PalmPilot as a prop. Agreed? Agreed.

**Mr Bisson:** How often have we done this? We don't need to talk on our cellphones as we're driving down the road. We've got it sitting in our car or inside our pocket, and all of a sudden you're turning a corner and the thing goes, "Ring," and it's just like a reflex. It's like Pavlov's dog. The phone rings, you grab it and you go, "Hello?" and before you know it, you're driving off the road or trying to run somebody off the sidewalk because you're not where you should be with your car because you're not paying attention. I think there should be a deterrent for people like me and others not to use these cellphones, quite frankly, when we're driving.

I have really done an extraordinary job of not using it, because I used to be the worst offender. I've got to admit, I say it in this Legislature, I was one of the worst offenders of using cellphones while driving. I've had a couple of incidents that have shown me that, man, am I ever lucky I didn't run somebody over. There was one incident where I almost ran into somebody because my cellphone rang as I was at a stop sign at the corner of Commercial and Cameron, out by my place. I stepped on the gas in the time that the phone was ringing, I picked it up, and somebody came running out in front of my car. I just happened to catch him out of the corner of my eye. It was a truck, actually, a 1995 green Ford truck. I can't afford a big car on my wages, lowly little MPP that I am. So basically, I was very, very lucky.

*Interjections.*



**Mr Bisson:** Never mind the airplane, the boat, the motorcycle, the trips around the world; I can't afford the truck. Now you know why.

But I have to say, I almost ran this person over, and that taught me a very valuable lesson: that these things should not be allowed in vehicles, and I have sworn off these things. Turn them off. Don't use them while you're in the car. They're very dangerous things. I support your initiative.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I am very pleased to join in the debate on a very serious issue that is brought forth by the member for Durham. I would say that the member for Durham has been working on this issue very hard and he's had tremendous stakeholder input with respect to this particular piece of legislation.

I think what is fundamentally important here and where the members opposite have missed the point, which is not surprising, is that the purpose of the bill is "to help reduce the number of accidents on Ontario roads by banning the use of hand-held cellphones and other devices while driving."

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Tascona:** I woke them up, so I'm going to repeat where I was. The purpose of the bill, if you want to read it, is "to help reduce the number of accidents on Ontario roads by banning the use of hand-held cellphones and other devices while driving." The purpose of the bill in terms of driver safety and also in terms of dealing with driver education is obviously intended to deal with making the roads safer.

Everybody knows that cars can kill people and that cars are operated by people. The number of people who are killed on our roads is significant enough; we don't need any more distractions in terms of the type of devices that Mr O'Toole is trying to deal with.

The bill will also collect accident data when investigation cites the use of technology as the cause of the accident. This is similar to the current practice when alcohol or the failure to use seat belts are a factor in an accident. This is very important information that is going to be collected.

This bill is a different version from the previous bill. There have been some changes that have been made when it was passed for second reading in the last session, and they include the following: banning all novice drivers from using cellphones, whether they use a hands-free device or not; allowing the Minister of Transportation to add additional devices to the banned list through regulation—this will help the legislation keep pace with changing technologies, and we've seen a number of the members today show to the public devices that are being used: PalmPilots, BlackBerries, cellphones, to name a few; and also mandating that the Ontario driver licence tests include portions on driver distractions. So there are some very fundamental objectives here with respect to making sure that we make the roads safer. That's what it's all about.

There are some quotes I'd like to refer to from an editorial in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. May 29, 2001: "We need to regulate the use of cell phones and other driver-distracting devices. This is a no-brainer." You can tell that to the member from St Paul, based on his comments.

Lyne Fortin, Canadian Automobile Association, on CBC.ca, February 24, 2002: "It's as simple as that: don't talk and drive."

Also, the Honourable Heather Forsyth, Solicitor General from Alberta: "It's ridiculous for anyone in this House to believe they are in complete control of their vehicle while talking on a hand-held cell phone ... Simply talking on a hand-held cell phone has become a dangerous distraction." That's from the province of Alberta.

I just want to say that this is a serious issue. The member has done extensive consultations. I think he's done a very thorough job with respect to working with the Ministry of Transportation and dealing with the issue.

This is an issue that is very serious because of the volume we have on our roads. There is no room for error with respect to distractions, whether it's the radio or whether it's a cellphone. How can you drive the vehicle when you've got one hand on a cellphone and the other hand on the steering wheel when you're dealing with a tremendous amount of traffic volume?

**1130**

The member from St Paul's missed the purpose of the bill. He also says, "Don't penalize safe cellphone users." Where have we heard that argument? He cites the gun registry. The arguments on the gun registry were, "Don't penalize people who are responsible gun owners." But he twists it around to his own context with respect to cellphone use because he is obviously in favour of having cellphone use out there at any time.

There's no doubt that cellphones are used as a safety device in terms of notifying the public and the police with respect to accidents out there, obviously to tell people or your loved ones where you are if you get into car problems. But the bottom line is, cars kill and guns kill.

What we're dealing with here is a purposeful piece of legislation with respect to safety in dealing with distractions. We're not trying to penalize safe cellphone use. What we're trying to do is make sure that our roads are safer, making sure that drivers are educated, making sure that drivers know what the rules are and deal with the technology.

**Mr Bradley:** My first question to my friend Mr O'Toole is, what on earth happened to the bill? I thought his bill had passed the House originally. I see in the throne speech it says that all votes are now going to be free in private members' hour. Here, all these years, I was under the impression, listening to government members speak, that they were all free votes. Now I find out that the government whip was controlling these votes. The fact that they would deep-six his bill is of great concern to me.

I can see why he wants to be persistent about it. I wish him better luck now than before. He knows you have to

get it past the whiz kids, the people who told the caucus 15 minutes before it happened that you were going to have a budget at the Magna Corp. I call it the "Magna Carta." Those people are probably the ones who killed this bill before. I'm glad to see that the member's persistent enough to sharpen his elbows for that crowd in the Premier's office, who are unelected, highly paid and have much more power than people such as Mr O'Toole.

I thought he might mention in his bill the fact that there's a need for road improvements through St Catharines on the QEW. We're having some at the Henley Bridge now, but the access and egress portions of the road are very unsafe. There is a need for those improvements. Now that the federal government is there pulling the province along, I suspect we might have an announcement from the provincial government because, just as with GO Transit, the federal government said, "Look, we're prepared to have public transit move out into these other communities." That puts the pressure on the provincial government. Now there will be pressure to improve the road through St Catharines. I know the member would be very supportive of that. He's the kind of member who would be.

I'm wondering as well if he has checked this with my good friend Frank Sheehan, the head of the Red Tape Commission. I heard your government said that virtually all regulations are terrible things to have out there, that the opposition parties are too regulatory. I see today now that two bills have come in that call for regulations. I support both of them, but I wonder where the ideologues in the government are going to stand on this, the people who have the real control and how you're going to go to the folks who send so much money to you and come to those big fundraisers. What is it going to cost to golf at Kettle Creek?

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** Ten thousand.

**Mr Bradley:** Ten thousand, \$12,000, something like that at Kettle Creek. I worry about that.

Look, there are distractions for drivers. Those distractions should be removed.

The member has not imposed a total ban. He says that the headsets are available. You can't have both ears covered, you're not dialling and so on. His bill is a compromise. Even those who are concerned should have those concerns at least met by the provisions of this bill.

It's like seat belts. A lot of people to this day would not wear seat belts if it was not the law of the province. It is the law of the province, so people wear them. I know they'll say it's difficult. A lot of people use cellphones today. Probably all of us in the House have used a cellphone while driving some time or other. If it's the law that you can't, people won't do it.

So I intend to vote in favour of the legislation that's being proposed. I simply worry that the Red Tape Commission will get hold of this and put another block on it, as it did last time. But maybe with the so-called free votes we're going to have, things will change.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** Like my friend from St Catharines, I also will be supporting the bill standing in the name of Mr O'Toole, Bill 3.

I would also echo the comments that it is curious that for a government that says public safety is job one, the number one top priority is safety—I don't think there are many who would argue the point—that on an issue from their own backbencher that has been through the process here, been to committee, it's still not the law. So what gives?

I suspect it is exactly what the member for St Catharines has talked about in his final moments and that was the fact that you're worried about the potential conflict or the inconsistency of saying, "Regulation bad; Mr O'Toole's bill good." But that's the essence of governing and hopefully getting beyond blind ideology. That has been your argument. You have said all along that any kind of regulation is red tape and red tape is to be cut and therefore any regulation that disappears is a good thing.

We've sat on this side of the House for eight years now—

**Mr O'Toole:** And you'll sit there for another eight.

**Mr Christopherson:** I won't be sitting here for another eight. That's a given. That's an absolute. How much longer I sit here, in fact, is more in your hands than mine at this point, so I don't have a particular political axe to grind here. I just point out the fact that it seems to me, John, that your biggest problem is your own colleagues. You've got us on side, you've got the process on side, I suspect you've got the public on side. You've got all the people who care about highway safety on side. Everybody is on side except your cabinet, the de facto government of Ontario. So it does give one pause to wonder how much real commitment there is.

John, they could make you a hero in one fell swoop. You've got to be just drooling at the prospect of being so close to getting this bill passed, where you're out there saving lives. Innocent people will live a long healthy life because of you and your bill and your initiative. It would be a good thing too. I'm not mocking you; it would be a good thing.

But what I can't understand is, when you line all those things up behind—most of us would give our political right arm to have that much political horsepower behind any bill or initiative we brought before this House. So you've got all that going for you and here we are, private members struggling again to help John let his bill see the light of day. And we're going to do that for you, John. We're going to do that for you for one important reason: you've got a good bill in front of the House.

I don't think there's one of us who hasn't already shared or could share stories about why this makes a lot of sense. The only reason one wouldn't do it is if you take libertarianism to its extreme, where you just don't believe in any kind of government regulation or any kind of government control. If that's where you're at, then you're probably an individual who hates with a great deal of passion virtually all the laws that are on the books, save and except maybe a few fundamental ones. Other



than that, you've got everybody on side, and you should. I can only hope that we give enough support in this House that we can help you embarrass the government to get past the fact that they don't want to be seen to be regulating.

But there's a bigger issue here and in the last minute that I have I want to be very serious and say I was not kidding when I talked about saving lives. This will. If there are people who feel that their rights are being violated, I think we need to take that very seriously. Government needs to start from the premise that rights that individuals have are theirs under the Constitution, and that government only steps in and starts to curtail those rights when they have a justifiable reason within a democratic society. The best examples, of course, and the most recent, are seat belts, motorcycle helmets and, not that long ago, helmets for kids riding bikes. These are cases where we've said, "No. We, as a society, are going to remove your individual right to choose." That's a big thing. We ought only to do that when we think the severity of the issue warrants it. This does. Innocent people die and get hurt every day because the use of cellphones is distracting and it's causing drivers to create accidents.

So I say to my honourable friend that you have a good bill, you have a good issue, you've got all the political horsepower you could hope for, and all we need now is—once again, the opposition finds itself trying to shake the cabinet to open its eyes and see the reality of what needs to be done.

1140

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** As we've heard today and in previous cellphone debates, the purpose of this legislation is to help reduce accidents; to do that by banning the use of handheld cellphones while driving. I also wish to speak in favour of this legislation introduced by John O'Toole, our member for Durham. I commend the member for Durham for his perseverance, and I wish to commend him for his tenacity and his dedication to this issue. He has done the work. He may well be too modest to acknowledge that, but he has done the work. He has the knowledge and the experience from his work on this, the kind of experience that will serve this cause well on the road ahead.

Cellphones are very important for someone like myself, a rural MPP. But I have also seen the evidence of distraction and have noticed fellow motorists who have lost sight of the goal when they're moving from one destination to another in their mobile office.

During the initial debate on this bill, I related to the Legislature some of the tribulations of shuttling between several offices and operating out of several vehicles. Very clearly, hand-held cellphones and driving don't mix. It's a bad mix when you throw in other things such as changing channels on the radio, people who have tape decks or CD players, CB radios; oftentimes you'll see a pen and a notepad on the front seat.

**Mr Christopherson:** Cigarettes.

**Mr Barrett:** Cigarettes and cigars. Some people, perhaps, read novels or newspapers when they drive. Again,

the cumulative effect really gives new meaning to that old expression "driven to distraction." It was the difficulty in this kind of distraction that drove me to incorporate a hands-free system in my vehicle. I merely screwed a cradle into the floor of my vehicle, and immediately noticed the improvement: the fact that I could talk on the phone and have both hands on the wheel.

We do recognize that cellphones are key to doing business in Ontario; they're key to doing business on farms and in small towns in my riding. This legislation cannot be considered a barrier to doing business. It does not ban cellphones. It bans the hand-held cellphones when driving and favours the hands-free system that I have adopted.

Business and a strong economy underpin the success of Ontario over the past seven years, and this bill is business friendly. This legislation will contribute, in part, to the continued growth of our strong economy, just as tax cuts and the attendant job creation have contributed to our strong economy. Only a strong economy, unfettered by any modicum of red tape, permits investment in health, education, environmental initiatives and safe communities—all the good things we value in the province of Ontario. Only a strong economy bankrolls the services that we need for a better quality of life. Only a strong economy has created well over one million jobs in this province. Only a strong economy has enabled us to assist well over 600,000 people get off welfare.

This cellphone legislation is a compromise. It does create a balance. It is cognizant of the demands of business and our ever-growing economy and balances that with road safety.

There have been a number of studies conducted to demonstrate the dangers of using hand-held cellphones: in 1997, the University of Toronto indicated that a person using a cellphone is four times more likely to be in a collision than a non-user; and the New England Journal of Medicine in 1997 stated that cellphone users are four times more likely to be in a collision than non-users. This is roughly the same accident rate as drivers who are legally impaired. There is a plethora of other resource papers but time does not permit to go through them.

I feel that this legislation is based on research evidence and will go a long way to better enable drivers to understand the dangers of using this equipment. I encourage all members to support this important piece of legislation.

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** I am pleased to stand and have an opportunity to participate in the debate. I say off the top, as I did when this bill was before the House some time ago, that I will be voting against it. I will be voting against it not because I disagree with the argument that there are distractions for people operating motor vehicles in our province. In fact, the distraction piece I think is the fundamental issue at stake here, but the bill that is proposed deals with something like issue number six, the scientific distraction list. This is that cellular phone use is the sixth most-noted distraction in the causes of motor vehicle accidents. The

last time there were derisive comments because I dared to suggest in the debate that I would move the veal parmigiano sandwich amendment.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Smitherman:** There he goes again. Mr O'Toole has been rattled by the suggestion in this debate that maybe there is something to be considered here about other distractions that cause accidents when people are operating motor vehicles in our province: dealing with things like the radio, kids in the back seat, food, the application of makeup. There are other concerns. What do we have to do to deal with those things?

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** Where do you put your makeup on?

**Mr Smitherman:** He just puts a bag over his head.

If we look at the issues, perhaps the way to deal with this is the way the law does now, which is to give our police officers the opportunity to issue other Highway Traffic Act summonses for dangerous or careless driving. If there is evidence that a distraction that is occurring behind the wheel is contributing to an unsafe driving situation, our police officers already have an array of tools at their disposal.

This member comes from a GTA riding and he will know that the issue of gridlock in the greater Toronto area, which has been made much worse under the hands of this so-called government, means that countless thousands and thousands of people spend hours and hours a day behind the wheel—otherwise less productive time—often hardly moving at all. I think that this bill seeks to limit their capacity to be efficient, to stay in touch with their family, to let them know that they are coming home late again.

One of the other members raised the issue of CB radios. It is interesting to me—my father was a trucker—that CB radios weren't outlawed, that there wasn't a prohibition on the use of CB radios over time, because the evidence was so clear that the distraction was causing motor vehicle accidents. We didn't see that because we weren't at that time having an Ontario Legislature, I guess, that sought to find little populist wedge issues. But I think at the end of the day there is a fundamental hypocrisy: that the government on the one hand that likes to say that all red tape is bad, seeks to pile it on, when already in legislation and available to police officers are serious tools to deal with the distractions that may occur behind the wheel.

1150

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** It's my pleasure to join in this debate today and support the member from Durham. John O'Toole has been working so hard on this private member's bill. So I'd like to support Bill 3, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway.

It's certainly worth noting what the purpose of this bill is, and the purpose "is to help reduce the number of accidents on Ontario roads by banning the use of hand-held cellphones while driving." I think that's a very

worthy purpose, and it's certainly backed up by recent studies, as is the case with the recent study done by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, which suggests that cellphone use contributes to 2,600 deaths and 330,000 injuries a year on US roads. If we can do anything to reduce needless injuries and deaths on the roads of Ontario, I think we should be doing that.

It is also worth noting, of course, that Ontario has made great success in reducing injuries on the highways. In fact, we have the safest highways in North America. I certainly do a lot of driving as an MPP and involved with Northern Development and Mines, and in fact, 50,000 kilometres a year, getting around the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. This week, I was up to Pointe au Baril, to Restoule, and also in parts of northern Ontario, up to Elk Lake, to Elliot Lake, to Thessalon, Sault Ste Marie, Garden River First Nation.

**Mr O'Toole:** Do cellphones work up there?

**Mr Miller:** Actually, yes, we're getting more and more coverage across the province. Pretty much that whole route, with the exception of Restoule, had cellphone coverage.

The fact is that a lot of people use cellphones and there's a lot of good that comes from cellphones, particularly in remote areas where you can get help when your car breaks down, when you have an accident. There certainly are a lot of positives.

I think the key part of this bill is that it's not banning cellphone use completely. There are exemptions, and one of the exemptions is that you'll be able to use a hands-free-type technology to be able to use a cellphone. Certainly my experience with using hands-free technology is that you are much less distracted, you're able to keep two hands on the wheel and still make use of a cellphone. It's much less distracting than using a cellphone in the normal way. As well, as technology improves, I'm sure there are going to be systems built right into automobiles so that they'll be voice-activated and you won't have to dial numbers.

Certainly my own personal experience of using a cellphone prior to using hands-free is that you are distracted and you find—I know my own experience is I tried to dial a number and ended up in the next lane while on the highway, which is not what you should be doing.

Recently we see cellphone service expanding all across the province. Recently in North Bay, there was the NOHFC, the Ontario government announced funding to assist getting cellphone coverage across Algonquin Park so there now will be cellphone use available in Algonquin Park.

I think this is a very worthwhile bill. If it saves one life, that will be worth it, without question. I know that Mr O'Toole has worked very hard on bringing this bill forward. He made improvements to it when it went to committee last year, and I look forward to fully supporting this bill. I'm sure it's going to be a benefit to all the people of the province of Ontario.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I rise for a few minutes to speak to this bill. I opposed this bill last



time, and certainly have heard absolutely nothing today that would change my view on this.

I guess this is the third time this member has brought this bill forward. I do commend his commitment to the cause, but I guess I question his caucus's commitment and his cabinet's commitment to this, how they keep hanging it out to dry. They allow the member to bring this bill forward, they string him along and then they cut it off. Every opportunity that this government across the floor has had to bring this forward, unfortunately, they've shafted their own member.

I don't understand why the member's colleagues don't like this idea. It certainly seems to have a lot of support when we're here in private members' hour, but then he can't get it through the cabinet. So I certainly think if you're serious about this bill, you're probably going to have to spend a lot more time convincing your caucus, your Minister of Transportation and your cabinet rather than convincing the opposition. Certainly the lack of support you're receiving in your caucus is embarrassing and probably insulting to the cause you're trying to fight and bring forward.

This is, to me, a simplistic solution to a complicated problem.

You talk about distractions. Well, there are hundreds and hundreds of drive-through Tim Hortons doughnuts, a great Hamilton company, in this province. How many of us stop, go through a drive-through, pick up the coffee, put it in the car and off we go? I would argue with you that the distraction of having a hot coffee in your hand is probably as much as having a cellphone when you're driving.

When you drive through a McDonalds or Wendy's—now, I don't do that, because I don't eat that kind of food—but if you do and you've got a hamburger and sauce dripping all over the place and you're trying to eat as you're driving, let me suggest to you that that distraction is probably greater than it would be with a cellphone. Are you now going to ban drive-throughs? Are we now going to say drive-throughs are not allowed because if the driver, whether it's a coffee or a hamburger or fries, is going to be distracted and possibly it's going to be illegal here in Ontario?

You've got billboards across the province, down the highway, and you've got these flashing billboards, these television screens that now act as billboards. Is that a distraction? I would argue it is. Are we going to take that step now and ban that?

There's very little evidence to suggest that an increase in cellphones in this province has led to an increase in accidents. In the last 10 years across Canada, cellphone use has gone from about a million cellphones to approximately 10 million. Accidents have dropped by 10% across this country. So there's very little evidence that suggests a correlation here.

What we need to do is ensure that the police officers have the tools to enforce the current laws that are in place when it comes to careless driving, because the argument is that the distraction is not speaking or concentrating on

what you're saying, but holding the phone. So the argument my colleagues would like to put forward is that if you have the hands-free device, you're not distracted. I don't think that the distraction is having the phone in your hand. I think if you follow your argument, the distraction is concentrating on the conversation you're having, rather than this phone in your hand. So if your argument was that generally talking on the phone is a distraction, you'd ban it outright, not simply a hand-held compared to a hands-free cellphone.

I think there needs to be better driver education here and better enforcement of current laws. There has to be a commitment across this province that we're going to give police officers the resources and the tools, and ensure we have enough police officers on the roads, which this government has cut, to enforce the laws that are there. The laws are in place to enforce careless driving distractions that now occur, but I would say that this is a very simplistic, hot-button, topic-of-the-day approach.

Again, I say to my colleague across the floor, you don't have to convince us. You've got a job to do to convince your colleagues. They're the ones that keep shooting you down every time you bring this forward.

**The Acting Speaker:** This completes the time allocated for debate. The response? The member for Durham.

**Mr O'Toole:** I am very pleased to be sitting beside the Honourable Brad Clark, who was the Minister of Transportation, who's been listening to this debate this morning, as well as, in front of me, Mr Turnbull, a former Minister of Transportation, and Mr Klees.

This is an important issue. In fact, all members come to this House to make a difference and to make a contribution. If you by coincidence save a life, then we've made a contribution.

I also want to take a moment to thank Mr Murdoch, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, for allowing me this opportunity by trading his time with me.

But I have to respond. I was happy there were four members from the Liberal Party who spoke. It appears that this time they're evenly split, which is usual. But I commend Mr Bradley's insight for asking the right questions. He did put to us a very important question: why did not the caucus or the government move forward? Clearly, we prorogued the House and that's the reason it didn't go forward in the general government committee.

Many members have had the opportunity to speak on this issue, but the member from Hamilton West, Mr Christopherson, I think put it best. Out of respect, he said that this is a good bill that's before the House. This will save lives. That's what this is about. When you come to vote, think about the fact that you have an opportunity to save lives.

**1200**

Of course, the members from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant and Parry Sound-Muskoka all made very worthy contributions.

I put to you this question today to have an opportunity to vote to do the right thing: to put road safety first. My

commitment to you is to continue to work with the Honourable Frank Klees to do this bill, to get it right, to continue the consultations. It's my intention to send it to the general government committee. I'm confident that our Premier will allow this to go as a free vote. I'm confident that the members from Hamilton East and St Paul's and George Smitherman will come to their senses and do the right thing.

With that, thank you for the time.

**The Acting Speaker:** This completes the time allocated for debate on this ballot item.

# HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (NO CONVEYING OF PASSENGERS FOR COMPENSATION), 2003

## LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (AUCUN TRANSPORT DE PASSAGERS MOYENNANT RÉMUNÉRATION)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** We'll now deal with ballot item number 1.

Mr Gill has moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to restrict the conveyance of passengers for compensation.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to the committee of the whole House.

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** I request unanimous consent to move this bill to the committee on finance, please, if I may.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Gill has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance. Agreed? No.

All those in favour of referral to the standing committee on finance will please stand and be counted.

All those opposed will please stand.

A majority being in favour, this bill is referred to the standing committee on finance.

# HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2003

## LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** We'll now deal with ballot item number 2.

Mr O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 3, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to the committee of the whole House.

All business relating to private members' public business now—

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I would move that this be referred to the general government committee.

**The Acting Speaker:** You're just in time.

Mr O'Toole has asked that this bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed. This bill will be referred to the standing committee on general government.

All matters relating to private members' public business now being complete, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

*The House recessed from 1204 to 1330.*

## CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** The member for Renfrew on a point of privilege.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I'm rising this afternoon pursuant to standing order 21 on a point of privilege regarding what I believe to have been, and to be, a serious contempt of this Legislative Assembly. I beg your indulgence to take a few moments this afternoon to make my submission to you. In saying that, I want to say to you, Speaker, and to my colleagues that I am very mindful that this is the first day back and important public business awaits us all this afternoon in question period and beyond. I speak this afternoon as a member of the Legislature to other members of the Legislature about what I really do believe to be a matter of very serious importance to each and every one of us as members of the Legislature.

Let me begin by arguing that the so-called budgetary process that was engaged in by the Eves government in the month of March 2003 is, in my view, at its core the contempt about which I will now complain.

Let me begin my submission this afternoon by referring to the second edition of Joseph Maingot's Parliamentary Privilege in Canada very quickly to establish what we understand or at least what the authorities have told us represents contempt in the Canadian parliamentary tradition. Quoting from page 225 of the second edition of Maingot's Parliamentary Privilege in Canada, I read, "Contempt is more aptly described as an offence against the authority and the dignity of the House."

He goes on to observe something that was highlighted in a ruling by Madam Speaker Sauvé in the Canadian Parliament in 1980, the following: "While"—he, Maingot, says—"privilege may be codified, contempt may not, because new forms of obstruction are constantly being devised and Parliament must be able to invoke its penal jurisdiction to protect itself against these new forms; there is no closed list of classes of offences punishable as contempts of Parliament."

I just simply want to make the point again. At its core, contempt, we are told—I think rightly so—is, I repeat, an



offence against the authority and the dignity of Parliament.

In making that observation, I'm also mindful and would like to quickly reference a judgment made in this House in 1997 by Speaker Stockwell. In the judgment of January 22, 1997, where Speaker Stockwell found a *prima facie* contempt at the time against the government, he said—and time does really not permit this afternoon for me to go through chapter and verse of quite an interesting judgment four, five, six years ago by Speaker Stockwell, but he basically said the government of the day, I think particularly the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, was in contempt, at least to a *prima facie* degree, by virtue of an action they had undertaken by issuing advertising around a matter of legislative activity that was still before the House.

As important as Speaker Stockwell's decision of that day, where he found a *prima facie* case of contempt on the basis of government advertising around a matter then before the Legislature, he, I think, wisely observed in that judgement that he, in 1997, was able to make that finding of contempt on a *prima facie* basis mindful of what Speaker Warner had said here in 1994 and what Speaker Fraser had said in Ottawa in 1989 in judging similar issues.

I think the point of Mr Speaker Stockwell's opinion that day that I want to highlight, not to diminish his finding of a *prima facie* case of contempt, was his drawing our attention to what Mr Speaker Fraser said in Ottawa in 1989, when Mr Speaker Fraser made it very clear to the Parliament and the public service of Canada that in Canada we have a parliamentary democracy, not an executive democracy and not an administrative democracy.

I think it is a very important point. It was very clear in Mr Speaker Stockwell's judgment that he recognized the growing impatience of Speakers—the Warner case here in 1994, the Fraser case in Ottawa in 1989—that there was a clear pattern of encroachment upon the authority of Parliament. In most of those cases the question that was before the House—this Legislature or the federal Parliament—was government advertising around matters then before the Parliament of Canada or the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

With that in mind, the question has to be asked: how is it that what Conway alleges about March 2003 represents a contempt? Let me very quickly deal with the events of March 12 through March 27, 2003.

On March 12, 2003, the operative assumption of all members of this assembly was clearly that the Legislature, according to the timetable, would reconvene and meet on March 17. On March 12, five days before the expected reconvening of the Legislature, the cabinet recommended to the Lieutenant Governor that the session be prorogued, which it was that day, March 12.

Almost at the same time, the Minister of Finance for Ontario, our colleague Ms Ecker, announced that there would be a presentation of the Ontario provincial budget, 2003, outside the Legislature. Let me read very briefly

from her remarks—these remarks were made, as far I can tell, just moments after the Premier recommended to the Lieutenant Governor the prorogation of the legislative session. The Minister of Finance said moments later, "We have completed our pre-budget consultations, we have listened to the people and we intend to deliver our budget at a yet-to-be-disclosed location outside the Legislature and while the Legislature is not in session." We found out a few days later that in fact the budget, so-called, would be presented at Brampton at the Magna training centre on the afternoon of Thursday, March 27.

I want to say to all honourable members on both sides of the aisle that this was a clear, deliberative choice made by the leader of the government and his colleagues in cabinet. It is not as though there was a very significant happening—an act of God, a flood, a fire or something unexpected—that intervened; not at all. This was a clear, conscious choice to recommend to His Honour the prorogation of the session on March 12, five days before it was to reconvene, and moments after that recommendation from cabinet to His Honour for prorogation, the announcement by the Minister of Finance that there would be a provincial budget, so-called, presented outside the Legislature, outside the legislative session, at a place to be decided sometime in the future, which as I indicated we found out not long afterwards would be the Brampton training centre of Magna International.

My invitation, like I expect all of your invitations, came by fax from the Minister of Finance to my Queen's Park office on the afternoon of March 24. I was invited—I was invited—as the duly elected member of the Legislature for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to join others from the assembly and outside to be part of this novel presentation of the provincial budget for 2003.

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I want to say to you that there was no question about what the government planned to do. All the language in the literature and the statements of the Minister of Finance, and later the Premier and other members of the cabinet, made plain that this would be the provincial budget, complete with a lock-up and budgetary papers. That is what happened between March 12 and March 27, 2003. I repeat, it was not accidental. It was not driven by circumstances that were well beyond the control of mere mortals, including the First Minister and the Minister of Finance; it was a clear, deliberate, conscious choice to do this, for no good reason that I can see, other than advancing the partisan position of the current government. That is the chronology of March 12 to March 27, 2003, about which I want to complain most seriously.

I want to say this—dare I say it as a senior member of the Legislature?—to all of my colleagues, and I'm going to proceed now as quickly as I can in a serious and fair-minded way, which has not always been the way I have behaved in this place. I want to say as well that while I've spent a long time here in opposition, I spent some memorable time as a busy senior minister of the provincial government. I understand the pressures that my friends on the government bench, particularly the cabinet,

face on a daily basis. But what happened in March, in my view, is a very serious matter and it is in my view a very serious contempt. Why? Because it goes to the core of who we are as members of Parliament and what it is we do in Parliament.

What do I mean by that? Speaker Fraser rightly observed in a very almost angry way 15 years ago, "We are not an executive democracy. We are not an administrative democracy. We are a parliamentary democracy that pivots on the doctrine of responsible government."

I'm not going to bore you with all of the authorities but I'm going to cite a couple. I can't think of one more relevant and more eminent than the late, great Eugene A. Forsey. He has written much on our system of parliamentary government, some of it from a highly traditional and classical point of view, I will admit. Let me just cite a couple of references from Dr Forsey's submission to the federal parliamentary committee reviewing these matters in Ottawa in the fall of 1985. What does Dr Forsey tell us, as practitioners in this ancient and important business, that is at the core of our business, our responsible parliamentary government? Let me just quote briefly from a couple of his references.

On page 9 of his document: "Responsible government is but an application of the English system of parliamentary control over the crown's finances and of the principle of redress of grievance before supply....

"In a sense"—he goes on to say—"the English crown from medieval times onwards was always forced to carry on government in such a way as to enjoy the confidence of the Commons." That's us. "Without the confidence or support of the Commons, taxes and aids could not be raised to supplement the prerogative and casual revenues of the crown, revenues which were wholly inadequate in themselves to sustain government. The continuing poverty of our kings ensured the growth of the popular element of our Constitution."

Later on: "'Responsible government' is the term we use to describe the harmony between the executive and the Legislature that we have already achieved. It is the essential and the distinctive feature of the British parliamentary system. In essence, it is simple. The executive is accountable to and owes its continuing existence to Parliament. The executive is accountable and answerable not only for its budget, its money measures and its legislative proposals but also for the whole of its range of activities. The servants of the sovereign can continue in office only so long as they retain the confidence of the Legislature, which means only so long as they can secure the grant of supply, the making of appropriations from the consolidated revenue fund necessary to carry on the important business of government."

Finally, I think perhaps most tellingly, he says the following: "The House of Commons"—that's us—"owes its origins, its growth in power, its pre-eminence and its ultimate authority over government to money."

He goes on finally to observe, "The parliamentary guardianship of taxation and expenditure is the pivot of our Constitution and the keystone of the arch of our personal liberty."

That is coming from one of the great authorities of our system. I don't want to sound too professorial or pedantic, but it is important, I say to my friend Jim Flaherty, that we understand today, perhaps more importantly than on other days, the essence of our system.

What did we see yesterday? We saw the pomp and the circumstance, the mystery and the magic of our system—our system, not the American system. Was there anyone, is there anyone in this place that would have suggested to His Honour, on recommendation from the First Minister, that the Queen's speech that we heard yesterday be read in a bowling alley in Orangeville? I think not.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** Well, maybe. But I tell you, it certainly wouldn't be my view. I simply want to point out to my friends, particularly on the treasury bench, yesterday we were all happy not only to embrace but to stand in the reflective glow and glory of that part of our system that reminds us of who we are and where we came from, and who we are not.

Our system, as Dr Forsey has observed, is the British system of responsible parliamentary government. It is not what many of us in government over the decades—and here I want to be ecumenical and fair-minded, because there's not one of us, myself included, in government who didn't want as much of the presidential power of that American congressional system as we could get. Today I want to say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, there is a creeping congressionalization that is becoming not just creeping, and to some degree, I say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, it is something for which we are responsible in varying degrees, and it is something about which each and every one of us as members of Parliament, this Parliament, must be and should be concerned.

The old doctrine of our system was and is "no grant of supply without a redress of grievance." I don't mean this to be as partisan and it's probably going to sound, but the idea that in our system of government the King's minister would take a budget someplace other than Parliament is unbelievable.

Norman Ward, in his classic account of a study in Canadian democracy, *The Public Purse*, published by the University of Toronto Press 40 years ago, makes the following observations.

Very briefly, underlying our system are the fundamental core values. "(1) The executive"—the cabinet—"shall have no income which is not granted to it or otherwise sanctioned by Parliament," and secondly, "the cabinet shall make no expenditure except those approved by Parliament in ways determined by Parliament."

The notion that you could take a budget, a real budget, away from the only place where it becomes legitimate is simply unacceptable and it is contemptible. Only this place can grant this government the aids and supplies that make it work.

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Ned Franks, the distinguished professor down at Queen's University, likes to tell his students, "Parliament



has four functions: (1) to make a government." We were reminded of that, weren't we, in 1985? Second, he says, "Parliament makes the government work. It gives it supply. It gives it the air to breathe, and only Parliament can do that. Parliament makes the government behave"; and finally and hopefully, "Parliament produces an alternate government."

But at the core of our system of responsible parliamentary government is the notion that only Parliament can grant supply, can vote money, and for only those purposes that Parliament decides, in its wisdom or lack thereof, should attract that money.

Look, my friends, at our standing orders. Look at standing orders 56 through 58. What do they tell us? I'm not going to bore you with a reading. It's not just the language; it's the constitutional principle that undergirds that. What does it say? It says a budget motion—and by the way, a budget in our system is essentially that motion, the language of which has changed over the decades. But essentially, the only thing that legitimatizes the budget is when the Minister of Finance stands in her place or his place here and says, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government." With that motion begins the sacred process that defines us at our core, and the standing orders make that plain: "The budget motion, upon proper notice, shall be moved by the Minister of Finance," and only after the throne debate is concluded, complete with any votes that arise from any motions. Why? For the very basic reason that Her Majesty needs to know there is a government here that can carry the House. So you don't get, according to our standing orders, to put your budget motion until you've tested the confidence of the House. It's very clearly set out in standing order 57.

After the throne speech is completed, the budget process begins in ways that are set out. It couldn't be clearer, and it has to be that way for the reasons given. That is our system.

Some have said, "Where is it written down?" Well, a good point, and there was a flurry of legal opinions in the province through the second, third and fourth weeks of March last. I don't want to spend too much time except to make this point: there are rules that are clearly set out in our standing orders, but there are usages, there are practices which of course guide the way we do business in our British system of parliamentary government.

It was the great Nova Scotian Tory Robert Borden who said one day in discussing matters like this, "Of course you can't write all of this down. We Canadians, as practical people, must leave much of this to that commonplace quality known as common sense."

What are the precedents that produced—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Conway:** I say to my friends opposite, and I'm not going to be much longer, this is a defining moment for us—more importantly, for you—in ways that I will talk about very shortly.

The question of convention arises, because it has been argued by some, "Show me where it is absolutely

required that you do this." I'm one of those who happen to agree with Neil Finkelstein in his opinion to Mr Speaker Carr that there is a very clear convention at work here. Mr Finkelstein, in making the test for convention, takes us back to the patriation case of about 20 years ago when the Supreme Court of Canada said that in testing conventions there are really three tests: what are the precedents; did the actors in those precedents feel they were governed by a rule; and finally, is there a reason for the rule? I think Finkelstein, on this point, is compelling and conclusive.

I have a little test. I have made it my business and I am not here to embarrass people. In talking to Ministers of Finance for Canada and for Ontario, on both side of the political aisle, some of them said it publicly, and some of them, for obvious and understandable reasons, said it privately: "It's unthinkable that I would have taken my budget someplace other than Parliament."

I want to take a moment to congratulate the Kingston Whig-Standard and young Arthur Milnes. In an article that he wrote on March 19, 2003, he contacted Baroness Boothroyd of Sandwell, the very distinguished, long-time Speaker of the British House of Commons. He asked Madame Speaker Boothroyd what her thought and opinion was about this novel way of presenting a budget in the British system of responsible parliamentary government. What did she say? "That's a very strange way of doing things. There would be an uproar in the British Parliament." She added, "[The budget speech] could only be done through the House of Commons and there would be great demands of recall of Parliament [if it wasn't]."

In the article, Boothroyd went on to say opposition members are key to the functioning of Parliamentary democracy, especially, she observed, in matters of oversight of government spending. Quoting her again: "It is the questioning of that [budget] statement that is so central to our democracy. The elected representatives [of the people] get the right to question. I'm very adamant about the way Parliament works."

She's not alone. I had another friend of mine and I said, "You know what you should do? Phone Darcy McKeough, one of the great Treasurers in my time here, and ask him two questions: 'Darcy, did Bill Davis ever ask you to do this, and would you have ever done it?'" The answer was a belly laugh that I could hear 600 kilometres away. Of course Mr Davis wouldn't have asked, and more importantly, Mr McKeough would not have offered it.

I want to say to my friend the current Treasurer, who I have known, worked with and liked for a long time, I am disappointed in a way about her involvement, and especially her leader, Mr Eves, because they've been in a place where most of us have not been. They have been at treasury. I know from my limited experience how those people at treasury view this. They must have been aghast, because they know what we should know: the presentation of a budget is fundamental to our system. It is about as important a part of the Parliamentary liturgy as I can imagine. The idea that you would take that

liturgy someplace other than to Parliament is unthinkable. But the conventions are clear.

I can't find a Minister of Finance who thinks this is a good idea. Some might say, "Conway, you will remember that day in 1988 when your good friend Mr Nixon did a variation on the theme." You're right, and I'll never forget it. I had a bruise for weeks because Nixon was just appalled that he could not get the attention and the agreement of the House that day to allow him to read the budget. At four o'clock he came in here—I can remember because I was sitting not far from him—and he was hell-bent for leather that that budget would be tabled in this place at four o'clock, first and foremost. And the reason it was being done that peculiar way, he would want me to say today, had nothing to do with his inability to understand or his willingness to accept a very important convention of the system.

1400

I think Finkelstein's argument around convention is absolutely conclusive. I want to conclude my remarks today with a couple of observations. It's not just Finkelstein. The distinguished, now retired, former Clerk of the Canadian Parliament, Robert Marleau, wrote all of us a letter in mid-March. I'm sure you've got it. Marleau is one of the authorities that I would stand up and quote at greater length today. I'm not going to do that. But he took the time to write us a letter, did this authority, and what did he say in his letter to members of the Ontario Legislature on or about March 15, 2003? He said that this decision to take the budget outside of Parliament, outside of the Legislature, if allowed to proceed unchallenged, is—quoting Mr Marleau now—"a gross affront to parliamentary democracy." Marleau, an authority, calls it "a gross affront to parliamentary democracy." He goes on to observe, "Budgets are about levying taxes and spending the proceeds. Over the centuries, we, the people, have acquired rights from the crown to scrutinize government policies, especially spending policies, through well-established and time-honoured parliamentary processes." That is Marleau.

Here is Ned Franks again, commenting on this particular business in the Kingston Whig-Standard on March 14, 2003: "Grievance before supply," says Franks. "The crown has to listen to the grievances of the people before Parliament does the crown's business. There isn't much left of parliamentary democracy if you get rid of that. Grievance before supply." He makes the point later on that this manoeuvre to take the budget outside of the Legislature, outside of Parliament, is an end run around one of the keystones of our parliamentary democracy. That's Ned Franks.

I'll be really careful, because I'm not here to give people indignation. I don't know how many of you read the March 17 piece in the National Post by Michael Bliss. I'm going to be very judicious in how I quote Professor Bliss's observations. Let me just quote a couple. This manoeuvre, he said, quoting him now, "is a contempt for our political heritage and our elected institutions" and is a "nearly mindless disregard for the Legislature." He goes

on to comment, I think really interestingly, that it "is a contempt for the people of Ontario."

I want to now to move to a conclusion. I'm asking you, sir, to find on a prima facie basis, as you will or will not, that there is a contempt here. I hope I've established that there is. The question is: what's to be done? We will deal with that perhaps at another time.

I just want to say something to my friends on both sides of the aisle. I observed the other day that, I think at last report, 96 of you intend to seek renomination or re-election. That's a good thing. I won't be with you. So my concluding observations are to those of you who are going to work really hard to come back here. I know how hard you're going to work. It's one hell of a sacrifice. I've got to say, after nearly 30 years, it's a great job. I don't ever expect to have one this good again. But I think to the 96 of you, representing 95% of this Legislature, that's a remarkably high percentage of incumbents who want to come back. That's a good thing. Whether or not the general electorate or the local electorate obliges is yet to be seen, but good for you. I guess I just have a question, why? Why do you want to come back? Because what we debate today and what we will decide on this matter—and just so you know, if there is a finding, all I want this House to do is to affirm with me a motion that says, "This Legislative Assembly has the undisputed right, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario." If we can't affirm that, then my question to myself as I leave is, what is it all about?

Every day for nearly 30 years I've walked through those doors. I don't know whether you've stopped to look at the portraits out there. The Queen and her consort flank the doors of the chamber. Beside Her Majesty and Prince Philip are the great portraits of Macdonald and Brown. But there are two other portraits you've probably not noticed. They are sentinels looking at us every day: Baldwin and LaFontaine. Who are they? What did they do? Theirs was the great fight of the 19th century. They were the champions and the ultimate victors around responsible government, a fight so fierce that 154 years ago this spring the Parliament Buildings in Montreal were burned to the ground by a raging mob so angry at what this doctrine was going to mean.

We are the trustees of that tradition. There's a lot in our job. Yes, we are grievance officers, we are—depending on where you are in the aisle—postmen and postwomen. My old friend Lorne Henderson: "Me and the Premier brung you this cheque." I say, quite ecumenically, regardless of who is in government, that temptation seems irresistible for Tory, Liberal or New Democrat. I can say that honestly after nearly 30 years of observation, and I've done my share of it as well.

But I hope at the end of the day we are more than grievance officers, postmen and postwomen, plaque deliverers, not to diminish the sometimes important aspects of those responsibilities. Remember Burke's great call: once elected, you, we, I am a member of Parliament—not a member of Congress but a member of Parliament. That has responsibilities that the public out



there I think understands but I sometimes think in the pressure of the moment we don't understand. I will say parenthetically to my friend the First Minister, as I would say to many of his predecessors here and elsewhere in the last 30, 40 or 50 years—and I think I understand what happened that day in early March of 2003. There was a temptation that in this case proved irresistible to be presidential. I can tell you, from being close to it, there is an allure in that regardless of your politics.

Unfortunately, I say to my friend Ernie or Bob or Bill or David, you're not a President in Parliament; you're a Premier in Parliament. And if you, we, they outside want a President, then you, we, they are going to have to live with a Congress. I don't want to go there. I don't want to go there. I think our system has, as Borden suggested, all the wonderful flexibility of British-born practicality and adjustment. But I think this last move that we saw in March, and there are others elsewhere, although this is about as flagrant and noteworthy as I have seen—then we are going to have to confront not a creeping but a rampant congressionalization of our system. That's for you to decide. I hope that as you go out to meet your electors you think about that.

That's why what we do here today—and I know the business has to proceed and I will conclude my remarks with this. It is a very important thing that happened six weeks ago. I'll wager a bit of a bet. I don't think it's going to happen again. I don't think it's going to happen again because it's going to be one of those customs, one of those practices, one of those usages that we will all remember for a long time. But I think we have a duty to stand in our places today or next week and affirm why it was so serious. I hope and I expect that you good, hard-working men and women who will be here after the next writ is returned—when some of us, Mr Speaker and Mr Conway and Mr Christopherson, won't be—will think this through as you go knocking on doors to get back here, hopefully to be something more than grievance arbitrators, plaque deliverers and busy constituency assistants. I hope you will remember those serious faces outside—Mr Baldwin and Mr LaFontaine—who went a long way to make that principle a reality. Because if we do not do that, if you as trustees in that ancient and important tradition don't do that, my friends on both sides of the aisle, ask not for whom the bell tolls. It will toll for you, it will toll for us, and more importantly, it will toll for this system, which will come to be a nullity and seen to be such.

That is my case, Mr Speaker. I thank you and my colleagues for your indulgence.

1410

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Just before we begin with the member for Niagara Centre, we have an honoured guest in the Speaker's gallery who hopefully will be able to stay for question period. But in case she doesn't, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery

Ms Marwitz, the Consul General of the United States of America to Canada. We welcome our friend and honoured guest.

#### CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** Mr Speaker, you of course will know that I too filed notice with you indicating that I sought the opportunity in my own right and on behalf of the NDP caucus to speak to the point of privilege. Quite frankly we join with the very thorough, capable, potent and persuasive argument made by Mr Conway. This is a very serious matter.

#### *Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** Well, we should be very cautious, quite frankly, about treating it with disregard, and there seems to be some of that—and that's an aside—being displayed in the Legislature this afternoon.

You know I gave you written submissions that are rather lengthy; I did that in the interest of time. I will simply outline the points Mr Conway may not have addressed specifically that we wish to, in addition to having joined with his comments. I also do want to thank Chris Charlton for her very capable assistance in preparing the submission that was filed with you. The government House leader received a copy of it as well.

Of course, we rely on the opinion provided by Mr Finkelstein. We're well aware, as you are, that other legal opinions were offered up. We've seen not all of those but most of those. It's my submission to you, Speaker, that the Finkelstein opinion is a very thorough and exhaustive one. Its clear reliance upon the patriation reference—that reference has been made already—and being guided by that, makes it in and of itself authoritative.

It really condenses the issues, because the facts are notorious at this point—there's no need to recite them again. We are indeed submitting to you that you ought to find that there was a breach of constitutional convention. I'll not make any extensive reference at all, but I do want to read from page 2 of the Finkelstein opinion: "It should be noted at the outset that a constitutional 'convention' is different from a constitutional 'law.' As explained in detail below, the courts can enforce constitutional laws by way of injunctions or mandatory orders, but cannot enforce constitutional conventions except to declare that they exist. Constitutional conventions are nonetheless binding on the Lieutenant Governor, the government and all members of provincial Parliament."

Why do I choose that excerpt? I'll tell you clearly. The court cannot enforce constitutional convention, but the court can identify one. I put to you that the circumstances surrounding the so-called budget presentation in March warrant looking at. One, this wasn't an inadvertent breach of convention. This was clear from the onset, and even when the government was confronted with criticism, it persisted in identifying this document as a budget. It didn't move itself or shift itself and re-identify the document as an economic statement or even a mini-budget. It persisted in identifying the document as a

budget, persisted in insisting that it had every right to do what it was about to do, and then, once it did it, insisted that it had the right to do it, having done it. That, quite frankly, aggravates the contempt here, because it moves it, far from an inadvertent breach, to a conscious, knowing, contemptuous breach of convention.

Let's take a look at what in fact happened up at Magna Corp. Again, the contents of that broadcast are notorious by now. It was clearly an effort on the part of the government to obtain a very controlled environment with invited guests. When you saw the broadcast itself, you saw what purported to be a budget speech interrupted by what were nothing less than infomercials. The only thing lacking was a 1-800 number to order your Ginsu knives, although one expected it at any point during that broadcast. The motive behind the interjections, the infomercials, was to add a flourish and spin to the budget that, quite frankly, wouldn't have been possible with a budget properly presented in the legislative chamber.

I think the only inference that can be drawn is that the government—and again, let's understand that every indication to date is that this event was funded with taxpayer dollars; this was not a private, Conservative Party partisan event in terms of being funded in a partisan way. I submit to you that's something, again, that aggravates the conduct of the government in this regard.

Not only is the motive for the breach important, and the eagerness of the government to pursue that breach even when being admonished, but the impact of the breach is important. You've heard reference already to a number of comments from editorials across the province. I submit to you that the impact of that breach of convention was to bring the House into odium, contempt and ridicule across the province, and I submit to you that that once again aggravates the contempt. It not only helps confirm the contempt but aggravates it.

Look very briefly at the sorts of things that were said. Again, there's much reference to commentary from the Kingston Whig-Standard, but on March 14: "Why a TV studio? Why not deliver the Ontario budget from Cancun, where it's warm? Or maybe one of Saddam Hussein's palaces, where there is also disregard for the concepts of democracy? ... Let's just crown Eves 'King Ernie the First'—and burn the Magna Carta while we're at it...."

"This out-of-Legislature budget experience is truly an affront to democracy. It is nefarious. It is wrong."

The Globe and Mail, March 14: "Mr Eves is insulting the elected MPPs and, through them, the people of Ontario. He is treating the provincial Parliament, the body that sets the province's laws, as a trifle to be ignored when it suits his purposes. He has forgotten that the government consists of MPPs who are part of the Legislature, not above it."

The Toronto Star, March 13, 2003: "Maybe we should start renting out Queen's Park for weddings, for all the use the government makes of our provincial Legislature...."

"This is a sham—and makes a total mockery of a budget. This 'budget' will be nothing more than a callous election 'event.'"

It goes on and on. I've obtained those numerous references and quotes from numerous newspapers and sources across the province, and I put to you that that confirms the observation that this government, with its conduct, with its breach of this convention, has brought the House into odium, contempt and ridicule.

#### 1420

There is no doubt, I submit, that constitutional convention requires that the budget be presented in the Legislature. You've heard extensive submissions with respect to the authorities that substantiate that, as well as contemporary observers who have fulfilled the role of Minister of Finance and other roles of authority, be it Speakers of the federal Parliament who are authorities in their own right who have stated that.

At the same time, accountability to the assembly, to the Legislature, is a cornerstone of responsible and representative government. Also the budget, as we've all noted, is not just any item of House business. It's not a passing ministerial comment or ministerial pronouncement regarding, let's say, policy, although the Speaker has been critical of ministers who have used out-of-Legislature venues to even express policy. But the budget is a confidence matter whose special status is dealt with separately and very clearly in the standing orders. Again, you've heard reference to those standing orders.

You're being called upon to find if there has been a *prima facie* contempt. I submit to you that the finding of a *prima facie* contempt requires meeting a far lower standard than the finding of contempt. I would suggest—and I'm relying upon numerous pronouncements by any number of authorities who are called upon to make a *prima facie* finding—that a *prima facie* contempt requires but some evidence of contempt that would reasonably permit someone to conclude that indeed there has been a contempt, some evidence that would permit that conclusion.

You've got more evidence, in my submission, than ever has been presented to this Legislature, and quite frankly more than would ever have to be, to make not only a *prima facie* finding of contempt, but I submit to you that at this point, although it's not your duty to find it, the contempt here is so clear, so complete, so thorough—(1) with its motivation, (2) with the very manner in which the contempt was performed, (3) with its impact, and (4) with the government's refusal to acknowledge having made any errors whatsoever; with the government's refusal to make any effort to purge that contempt; the government's refusal to apologize; the government's refusal to call upon, for instance, the Conservative Party to pick up the tab for the cost of that; the government's refusal to indicate that it indeed had made an error.

One further point in that regard: I referred earlier to the Finkelstein opinion. Finkelstein notes and the case law is clear that although a court cannot enforce parliamentary constitutional convention, the courts can advise as to when there is a contravention.

In this instance, the government had available to it the opportunity, especially when the alarm bells started ring-



ing, to quite frankly refer the matter to a court for an opinion as to whether it constituted a contravention. Had the court ruled otherwise—and I don't believe for a minute that it would have—the government then could proceed, acting in good faith. But the government, notwithstanding that it had the time and had received gratuitous advice to that effect, declined to do that.

I submit to you that this is very much a *prima facie* contempt. I submit to you that the Speaker should find that. I submit to you that when we can't go to the court for a ruling, and when the law is clear that the court cannot enforce a contravention of constitutional convention, the inference to be drawn is that it's the Speaker who then must be called upon, as you are in this very instance, not only to find that there is a contravention of that constitutional convention, but finally to initiate a process that constitutes a remedy. The courts don't have that power, for good reason. It's you, the Speaker, who has that power. I'm submitting to you that you are well within your jurisdiction and it is not inappropriate. Indeed, in this instance it cries out for the Speaker to intervene.

**The Speaker:** The government House leader.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I want to first thank the House leader for the third party for submitting his submission to me; it was very helpful. I will say that I found the submission by the member from Renfrew both very interesting and very enlightening.

I won't spend a tremendous amount of time dealing with the pro forma arguments that have been placed before the newspapers and media in the past, but I will take just a brief moment to outline the process of the members being invited to the presentation; the budget lock-up; the budget papers were tabled with the Clerk at the time of the speech; at the same time, copies were distributed to every member; the opposition leaders and members were given every opportunity to respond to the budget; there were precedents for delivery; and so on and so forth.

What we are talking about is the budget speech.

Let me say first and foremost, on a technical approach to how this House works, that we have three avenues to pursue when determining if something is in contempt or in fact out of order, and they're not the same. It's hierarchical; it's gradation. The primary place we go to determine if something is in order or out of order is the standing orders. If the standing orders speak to whether something is in order or out of order, it's clear, defined and finished. Why? Because we as the members of the Legislative Assembly have adopted and passed those standing orders and practices on how we will govern this House. We govern this House.

So if the standing orders speak to a specific issue, there is not any debate; there is no discussion. The standing order is clear. We adopted it; we passed it. That's how this business is run. That's how this House is ordering its business.

The second stage, if there is silence or ambiguity in the standing orders, is practices and precedents. They're

not the same. Standing orders have a higher priority than practices and precedents. We seek practices and precedents to have you, Mr Speaker, determine how this House should govern its business if there is silence or ambiguity in the standing orders—tier one, standing orders; tier two, practice and precedents.

If the practices and precedents are silent or ambiguous, we are left to go to the experts: Erskine May and Beauchesne. Much of that debate is voluminous. It's very interesting and it's sometimes long-winded, but if the standing orders are silent or ambiguous, if our practices and precedents are silent or ambiguous, we go to the experts.

Let me submit this to you, Mr Speaker: on the Finkelstein submission, he concluded there could be some constitutional convention. There are many others who would argue otherwise. I submit, Mr Speaker, that you have no authority to rule on constitutional arguments. Although some would want to give you that power, you don't have it. So the constitutional argument is moot. It's interesting, it's grist for the mill in a lot of cases, but it is moot.

We then go to the standing orders. What do the standing orders say? They do not say, "You must deliver the budget speech in the Legislative Assembly." They also do not say, "You must deliver the budget speech outside the Legislative Assembly." So, we don't have a clear position in the standing orders about how the budget speech should or shall be delivered. So now we have to go to practice and precedents.

The learned member for Renfrew, for whom I have a great deal of respect and with whom I have worked for a long time, has a very difficult time here. Did you notice how the debate kind of glossed over practice and precedents? Why?

We have a practice. We have a precedent.

In 1988 the then-Treasurer, Robert Nixon, under the leadership of Premier David Peterson, and with the treasury bench loaded with talented and articulate people such as Mr Conway, Mr Bradley, Mr Kwinter, Mr Phillips and Mr Sorbara—they were the treasury bench members who set the practice and the precedent. The argument would be that it was not an act of God; an act of God may change this. I heard it from your own lips.

What happened in 1988, with Mr Nixon as a treasury bench member, was this: the NDP, as is their fashion, were using dilatory tactics unusual by their nature. As a passing interest, it was kind of curious, because the dilatory tactic they were implementing was petitions. They were reading petitions ad nauseam opposing Sunday shopping, not knowing that three years later they'd be the government implementing Sunday shopping. That is just passing strange.

1430

Mr Nixon, whom I have a great deal of respect for and whom I sat in this Legislature with, was unable to introduce his budget speech in the Legislative Assembly—unable to. It was not an act of God, from God's lips to Bob Rae's ears. I'm certain that wasn't the situation.

There was no fire, no famine, no pestilence. It was simply a case that Mr Rae, through the rulings and procedures in the Legislative Assembly, had made it impossible for the Liberal treasury bench to introduce their budget.

Here's the rub: Mr Conway suggests that there were no options. I suggest parliamentary tradition, parliamentary democracy and the British process that we've adopted—there were options. There were many, many options, Mr Conway. You could have gone and negotiated with the NDP, satisfied whatever concerns they had—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Let me finish—or dealt with them in a different fashion, reaching a compromise with the third party. At the time, historically, that was how problems, issues and impasses in this Legislative Assembly were resolved. You chose not to. You chose not to because what they were asking you to do, properly and by the rules of this Legislature, you didn't want to do, and maybe you shouldn't have had to do it. It had to do with Sunday shopping. But they had this House in a tangle legitimately, properly and by the standing orders, practices, precedents and, experts would agree, legally. So, by fiat, by decision, by presidential decision-making, the Liberal Party decided that they would go downstairs, outside of this chamber, and deliver the budget speech of 1988. Practice, precedent: both tests met in 1988 with respect to the Liberal budget.

I do appreciate that the Liberals don't want to hear this, but—

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** We spoke about it.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Well, I think you spoke about it. I'm not sure you offered up these points.

Practice and precedents were determined in 1988 with respect to the Liberal budget speech in this chamber. Certainly, yes, the circumstances were different; I don't deny it. But the results, my friend, were the same, exactly the same: a budget speech was delivered outside of the Legislative Assembly. So, standing orders being silent or ambiguous, tier two, practices and precedents: in 1988 the practice was adopted; the precedent was set; the decision was taken.

I have no doubt the arguments will be made that the circumstances and issues surrounding the two decisions were in fact different. They were; I don't deny it. They were. But when you examine practice and precedents, the fact of the matter is, the result is the argument. So to square the circle of 1988 would make the arguments of the timeliness of your submission about 15 years too late, because 15 years ago, if there was contempt, if we were out of order, the argument should have been made at the time. I understand why Mr Conway didn't make the argument, because it was him, as part of the treasury bench, that took the decision to have the budget speech read in the chamber downstairs.

There will be much made of Beauchesne and Erskine May and many other of the experts, which is interesting

and informative. But that's the third test, and you don't go to the third test unless the first two aren't met. Standing order, test one; practice and precedent, step two. It was met in practice and precedent at step two.

Again with respect to the constitutional arguments, the legal opinions and the briefs that have been submitted to you by, I suppose, all kinds of experts, I submit to you that there are many who would argue what Mr Finkelstein has argued and there are many, many more who would argue otherwise. Your job as Speaker of the House, then, is to rule on the facts and issues put before you. I will say to you that there have been many times when I was Speaker where I had to rule on the facts and issues that were put before me. Mr Conway cited the example of the contempt motion with respect to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the publishing of an advertisement in the Ottawa newspaper. I'm not certain how that fits with respect to the example we talk about today, other than it happened to be me who made the ruling, but the fact of the matter remains that that contempt motion was presuming the passing of a bill in this House before the Legislative Assembly had in fact passed that bill. The comparisons, I think, are not there.

Furthermore, I recall making a decision in this Legislative Assembly that probably would mirror a decision taken in 1988 with respect to the budget submission of the government of the Liberal Party. I don't know if you remember, but at that time—unusual, again, as it was—the NDP were offering dilatory tactics with respect to passing a piece of legislation: the amalgamation of the city of Toronto. They submitted some 15,000 amendments to a bill. The decision of the Speaker at the time was as to whether or not those particular amendments were in order. I determined at that time that they were in order, and this House sat for 12 days before the regular business of the Legislative Assembly could continue. What had happened in 1988 was the NDP were offering petitions that were forcing the House to sit and not allowing the government to read the budget. They seem to be very similar. The government of the day under Premier Mike Harris said, "Fine, we will sit 12 days around the clock to have all the petitions heard. Then we will go back and deal with the business of the House." The government of the day under Mr Peterson chose to deliver his budget speech outside of the House and not allow the House to continue in its normal process. I think if you look at comparisons that are similar, that comparison is very, very similar.

In conclusion, we all know how this House works. We adopt standing orders. If the standing orders are silent, we go to practice and precedents, and no matter how you deal with the practice and precedents of 1988, you cannot square that circle. You went outside the House and delivered a budget speech not in the Legislative Assembly, and you had a choice.

Mr Speaker, I submit to you there is nothing out of order. If this assembly chooses to put in a standing order in future years that budget speeches shall and should be delivered in the Legislative Assembly, then it would be



out of order. But at this point in time, I submit, as eloquent as those submissions were and as interesting as those submissions were, they may have been long on conversation and long on research but were very short on depth and very short on meaning.

1440

Mr Speaker, I submit to you that the budget speech as delivered by the Treasurer, Janet Ecker, was not out of order and I would suggest to you that there is no contempt motion and there is no process by which this government should be penalized.

**Mr Kormos:** In response, it is interesting the utilization of concepts like practice and precedent. Precedent, I put to you, Speaker, is formal precedent. Precedent is rulings of the Speaker that can be relied upon and where a certain conduct or a certain course of activity falls within the definitions of the framework of that ruling. Mr Stockwell does not suggest that there is a precedent of that course. Practice, of course, indicates ongoing practice. One event does not make a practice, notwithstanding that the event he refers to 1988 is so thoroughly distinguishable from the circumstances surrounding this scenario.

**The Speaker:** I thank all three members for their very thorough presentations today. I will reserve my opinion and go over all the facts they have presented. I thank all of them for their presentations today and I will reserve my ruling on this issue.

It is now time for members' statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### CONSTITUTION DAY

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** It is my honour to rise in this House, I believe on behalf of all members but certainly members in our caucus, to commemorate the May 3 Constitution Day, which is an important day not just for Polish Canadians but for the entire people of Canada.

In 1791, the Polish Constitution was only the second in the world, and the first in Europe, enacted for equal rights, universal education, and the state care of orphans and the elderly. The struggle of the Polish people for those kinds of rights over the last few centuries has been an inspiration all around the world. Today, many of us sit in Legislatures like we do here in Ontario owing precedents to the Polish Constitution and to the struggles of the people. My generation in particular remembers and owes tributes to the struggles faced as recently as Gdansk.

I'd like to recognize for all of us here today the contribution that has been made toward freedom, toward a stronger Canadian society and a stronger country in Poland by the people who have been part of this strong and very proud Canadian Polish community. Today we have with us in the gallery Bernard Wisniewski, secretary general of the Head Executive Board of the Canadian

Polish Congress; Jan Cytowski, president of the Canadian Polish Congress-Toronto Branch; and Krzysztof Szydlowski, vice-president of the Canadian Polish Congress-Toronto Branch.

Polish Canadians celebrate May 3 with concerts and festivals. I would invite the people in this chamber to join us on Saturday for a flag-raising that would appropriately mark the auspicious implications of May 3 Constitution Day in Poland for freedom-loving people all around the world.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I apologize bringing up a point of order during members' statements, but because of the nature of the request I don't think it is inappropriate. I am seeking unanimous consent that because of the exceptional circumstances surrounding the debate that the afternoon began with, notwithstanding that question period will commence after 1500, it nonetheless be for one full hour.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

### TRANSPORTATION

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** I've been looking forward to getting back into the Legislature so that I could inform the House about the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan. In January, I asked each municipality in Waterloo-Wellington to provide me with their top transportation priorities for the next five years and beyond. From their council chambers, municipal offices and roads departments all 11 municipalities in my riding responded, and their recommendations form our action plan.

Along with over 40 recommendations, some key items of the plan include implementing the corridor study of Highway 7/8 between Kitchener and Stratford; a new four-lane Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph; funding to help Wellington county rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge; a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest; Waterloo region's light rail transit initiative; OSTAR funding for transportation-related projects; and other projects which we have identified.

On April 10, I arranged a meeting for our municipal representatives and the Minister of Transportation. We appreciated the minister's time, interest and insightful questions. Strong representation from across the riding had a positive impact on the minister and underlined our needs.

To follow up this meeting, I am introducing a petition in my riding asking for support for the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan and I plan to present it in the Ontario Legislature at the appropriate time.

The petition will allow concerned citizens a chance to support actions that are needed to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people, goods and services for the future and give us the transportation system we need for the 21st century.

## SARS

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** The SARS crisis has impacted our communities in many ways. It has adversely challenged our already strained public health system and, unfortunately, created fear among the people of Ontario, especially the city of Toronto.

The heroes amidst all of this are our front-line public health workers, who have uniquely and compassionately applied their medical and social craft in helping patients and families. We salute and laud their exhaustive efforts.

While this has had a negative economic and business impact on our city, we need to recognize and understand the social and community impact. Scarborough has been the hardest hit by the entire SARS situation.

In my own riding of Scarborough-Rouge River there's a condominium complex of three large buildings. There were two cases of SARS-like symptoms, yet this entire residential area, in a very busy and bustling part of Scarborough, has been unfairly tarnished and negatively painted as a place under quarantine, which was not true. The residents of this complex have been shunned. Mail, takeout food and newspapers were not delivered. Worse, repairs in the buildings were not done. Essentially they became victims of this. There is a social price.

In the bigger picture, as we begin to learn about the impact of SARS and as we begin to inquire about what happened, why it happened and how it could have been prevented, let us not forget the people. We must remember those who have died and their families, the community impact and the consequences on our society and, most importantly, our attitudes. We need to learn from this and revive our sense of decency and spirit.

## PENSION REFORM

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Yesterday, the government tabled in the House, and actually read in the House, contrary to what they did in the budget, their throne speech. In there was an item that I think is quite interesting in itself, and that is the whole concept of allowing changes to the rules so that people aren't forced to retire at age 65.

I want to say to the government directly today by way of this statement that quite frankly you're going in completely the opposite direction. As we talk to people across this province, people are quite clear. What they're talking about and what they want is not to have the ability to work longer and harder for less. What they want is good pension legislation that says people can build up pensions by way of portability, that you're able to index your pension so that you're able to retire at an earlier age and not a later age.

I purport through this statement to say that the government could get it right. They could decide to take a look at what's inside our public power platform that talks about pension reform and says quite categorically that what we need to develop in this province is a pension scheme that allows people to retire earlier by providing

for portability and indexing of pensions on a yearly basis so that workers across this province, no matter what they do, are able to retire early.

This government is taking the concept of Freedom 55 to the concept of Freedom 75, and I'm telling you that's not where the seniors in this province want to go.

## QUEEN'S GOLDEN JUBILEE MEDAL

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** On March 2, 2003, it was my great privilege to award the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal to 17 outstanding residents of Mississauga at a ceremony held here at the Ontario Legislature.

My honourees for this prestigious recognition were Dave Baker, Patti Janetta Baker, Angela Bozzo, John Bozzo, Mary Cline, Doreen Cooper, Jean Gallinger, Lynda Ginn, Edward Gittings, Silvia Gualtieri, John Keyser, Joan Phillips, Gordon Stewart, Gordon Williams, Gwen Wilson, Patricia Wise and Peggy Wittman.

Queen Elizabeth personally chose the theme for her Golden Jubilee year: giving thanks for and celebrating service to our community through voluntary efforts. All of my 17 nominees have made extraordinary contributions as volunteers over an extended period. Indeed, if we add up their length of voluntary service, the total comes to more than 500 years. Whether they are driving cancer patients, donating food and clothing to families in need, coaching amateur sports, leading Guides and Scouts, protecting our environment or serving on community boards, these exceptional people have made our great province a better place. I invite all members of this Legislature to join me in expressing our heartfelt appreciation to these outstanding citizens, for there can be no greater public service than the gift of personal time to a worthy cause.

1450

## SCARBOROUGH GRACE HOSPITAL

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** I want to tell all the wonderful people who worked at Scarborough Grace Hospital how much I and the community appreciate all they have been doing for us during these troubling times.

It was at Scarborough Grace Hospital where the SARS issue first arose. The hospital, as usual, was simply doing its best to serve the community when it was hit with the disease. We can all only imagine the enormous stress and anxiety that it has caused throughout the hospital. The strain on everyone has been immense. Through it all, the staff and medical professionals have served us splendidly.

I hope everyone at the hospital knows how much they are appreciated. In our time of need, our community turns often to our outstanding Grace Hospital. Two of our grandchildren were born there, and virtually all of our family at one time or another has received first-class service at the hospital.



Once again, our community recognizes how fortunate we are to have the brave, caring and dedicated people to look after us at the Grace Hospital. While these may seem like dark days at the hospital, the storm is beginning to pass and the rays of sunshine are coming through, and the Grace Hospital is beginning to return to its normal servicing of our community.

On behalf of all of us, we thank those dedicated staff very much for all they've been doing over these past few weeks.

#### FRANK DREA

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** I rise today with the sad honour of recognizing the passing of a colleague and a good friend to many people in this chamber, the Honourable Frank Drea. On January 15, Frank passed away at the age of 69, leaving behind his loving wife Jeanne and three grown children: Catherine, Denise and Kevin.

Frank Drea was, of course, a legendary journalist for the Toronto Telegram, a labour activist and an MPP for 14 years. He was a crusading journalist during the 1961 strike of Italian workers in the building trades, one of Canada's biggest strikes. He won the Heywood Broun Crusading Journalist Award in the US and a National Newspaper Award as a result of that coverage. He went on to work for the Steelworkers as a public relations director and won them many victories.

He was first elected to Queen's Park in 1971, for the riding of Scarborough Centre. Thereafter, he served in no fewer than three different ministries, with distinction. After his retirement from politics, he was appointed to chairman of the Ontario Racing Commission in 1985, a post he held for nine years—something I know he enjoyed immensely, given his love of horse racing.

His political accomplishments included groundbreaking legislation to protect workers and tradespeople, modernizing the insurance industry, reforming Ontario's prison system and improving rights and access for persons with disabilities.

He was a self-described hard-nosed SOB. He was a friend, a mentor and a great role model, someone who has left an indelible mark on this province and who truly earned the reputation of being "the people's minister." He will be missed.

#### CHINESE COMMUNITY

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** We, the people of Toronto, just came through a terrible nightmare. The World Health Organization had just indicated, as all of us know, that Toronto had a travel ban. That was designed to cripple the city and to shut us down. But we also know that the nations of the world began to shun Toronto and even quarantine us when we arrived at their shores.

But out of this nightmare, something great and positive arrived: 28 national organizations in Ontario got together and decided that an attack on one of their organ-

izations is an attack on them all. When one organization is in pain, they all feel the pain. So together they decided to help one another; together they decided to help the Chinese-Canadian community; and together they decided to ensure that help is on the way.

So today I'm delighted to introduce some people, but before I do, I'd like to say that the Chinese community also responded to that generous offer of help. Here is what they said: "We will never forget what you"—the communities—"did. Your social and economic support makes us really proud to be Canadians. We will continue to protect this country"—and to protect the city of Toronto. "Your support will motivate us to participate even more in building a better future."

I am therefore delighted to introduce these people who have become the keystones to a successful policy of non-governmental organizations helping the Chinese-Canadian community. They are Bernie Farber, representing the Canadian Jewish Congress; Mr Dill Mohamed, representing the South Asian communities; and Mr Tony Luk, representing the Chinese communities.

Congratulations, and thank you. You deserve a great deal of applause for you. You deserve a great deal of congratulation.

#### UNITED ACHIEVERS CLUB

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** I want to draw the attention of this Legislature to an extremely successful organization representing the black and the Caribbean community from mostly Brampton but also the broader reaches of Peel. They are known as the United Achievers Club. We're extremely proud of this organization because they will soon be celebrating their 20th anniversary.

I'd like also to acknowledge that last Saturday night they had one of their most successful fundraising events, called the Celebrity Chef's Evening, with over 300 guests. But the most important part was the number of chefs that participated in this event. The celebrity chefs that were there were members of all communities.

There were 42 chefs in categories such as appetizers, soup, main courses and desserts. I'm very pleased to say that I was a bronze medal winner in the appetizer category. MPP Raminder Gill, while he didn't win a prize, was very competitive with his tandoori chicken. The gold medal winner in the dessert category was no less than the Honourable Tony Clement.

We want to congratulate the United Achievers for another very successful event. Also, congratulations go to Judge Marv Morton because he won the soup category. Of course, he was the only one who made soup.

#### REPORTS, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I beg to inform the House that on January 31, 2003, the report of the Integrity Commissioner concerning the review under the

cabinet ministers' and opposition leaders' expense review and accountability act, 2002, was tabled.

I also beg to inform the House that on February 17, 2003, the report of the Integrity Commissioner regarding the Honourable John Baird with respect to a request from the member for Don Valley East for an opinion concerning a matter before the Ontario Municipal Board was tabled.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** Pursuant to the order of the House of December 11, 2002, I beg leave to present the report on the community reinvestment fund from the standing committee on public accounts, and move the adoption of its recommendations.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

**Mr Gerretsen:** Yes, Speaker. The committee came up with seven recommendations, and I'll just very briefly highlight four of them.

The Ministry of Finance should implement performance indicators to measure the achievement of revenue neutrality for each municipality under the CRF initiative.

The ministry should evaluate the financial impact of the local service realignment initiative on provincial and municipal finances from the start-up to the end of the fiscal year 2001-02.

It should assess changes in service delivery requirements and tax the capacity annually for each municipality for the purpose of establishing funding assistance under the CRF.

Finally, it should report to the standing committee on public accounts on the impact of cost-efficiency measures taken to deliver municipal services and changes in municipal taxes for each municipality. Jurisdictions in which cost efficiencies were not achieved and taxes were increased should be reviewed by the ministry.

We hope that the ministry will follow these recommendations.

We were very busy in the intersession, Speaker.

Pursuant to the order of the House of December 11, 2002, I beg leave to present a report on the violence against women program from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member wish to make a statement?

**Mr Gerretsen:** There are 11 recommendations in this report. It starts off by saying that the ministry should define the core services that all shelters must provide and ensure that they're adequately funded. The ministry should develop a policy to clarify the services a shelter does and does not offer in consultation with the Ontario

Association of Interval and Transition Houses; it should also report on the initiatives that it undertook back in August 2001 on waiting times for shelter accommodation and counselling. The final recommendation I'd like to draw to your attention is that the ministry should ensure that its regional offices employ a consistent and appropriate methodology to develop the amount of funding to be provided to the shelter. Again, we hope the ministry will take these recommendations and implement them.

1500

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultations 2003 from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

**Mr Spina:** The standing committee on finance and economic affairs conducted pre-budget consultations in Toronto, London, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Ottawa this past winter. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and recognize the members of the committee: Vice-Chair Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson, Monte Kwinter, John O'Toole, Gerry Phillips, Rob Sampson, and myself as the Chair.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the presenters to the committee and thank them for their co-operation. I want to particularly thank the clerk's office and the support staff for their continued assistance during our travels throughout the province.

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I beg to inform the House that during the recess, the Clerk received the 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th reports of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### GENOCIDE MEMORIAL WEEK ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA SEMAINE COMMÉMORATIVE DES GÉNOCIDES

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario / Projet de loi 4, Loi proclamant la Semaine commémorative des génocides en Ontario.



**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** This bill proclaims the week beginning on the fourth Monday in March of each year as Genocide Memorial Week. It includes the United Nations definition of "genocide" in the preamble. It is similar to other bills I've introduced in previous sessions.

I will be asking the House soon to give second reading to the bill and refer it to committee for consideration, including public input.

#### AMERICA DAY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR DE L'AMÉRIQUE

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to amend the Retail Business Holidays Act to make September 11 a holiday known as America Day / Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail pour faire du 11 septembre un jour férié appelé Jour de l'Amérique.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North):** This bill amends the Retail Business Holidays Act to proclaim September 11 each year America Day and to make it a holiday for the purpose of this act. It also commemorates the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and commemorates our close ties with the United States of America and our recognition of the US as a key partner on the North American continent.

#### AUDIT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to amend the Audit Act to provide for greater accountability of hospitals, universities, colleges and other organizations that receive grants or other transfer payments from the government or Crown agencies / Projet de loi 6, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics afin de prévoir une responsabilité accrue de la part des hôpitaux, des universités, des collèges et des autres organisations qui reçoivent des subventions ou d'autres paiements de transfert du gouvernement ou d'organismes de la Couronne.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** This is exactly the same bill that was given second reading unanimously by this House and was also unanimously approved by committee. It basically gives the Auditor General the authorization to carry out audits of grant recipients and to have access to all information and records of ministries, crown agencies, grant recipients and crown-controlled corporations in order to carry out his or her functions under the Audit Act.

Other amendments to the act make it an offence to obstruct the auditor in the performance of his or her duties, allow the auditor to examine people under oath and require information to be kept confidential.

I urge the government to pass this as quickly as possible since it once again was contained in yesterday's throne speech.

#### ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD AMENDMENT ACT (GREAT LAKES POWER EXCEPTION), 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO (EXCEPTION VISANT LA GREAT LAKES POWER)

Mr Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** This bill provides that consumers of electricity delivered by Great Lakes Power Ltd are eligible for the rate protection referred to in section 79 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. The consumers of electricity in the Algoma region are paying 40% to 50% more for electricity than anyone else in the province, and this just rectifies that situation.

#### GREATER JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR UNE OBLIGATION ACCRUE DE RENDRE COMPTE EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES NOMINATIONS À LA MAGISTRATURE

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to provide for greater accountability in judicial appointments / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à

accroître l'obligation de rendre compte en ce qui concerne les nominations à la magistrature.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** This bill is intended to provide greater public accountability for judicial appointments. It proposes to do that by making the appointment process for justices of the peace the same as that for judges; having the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee publish the criteria used in assessing candidates; permitting the Legislature by resolution to set or change these criteria; having the names of all the people found qualified and suitable for appointment submitted to the Attorney General for consideration; and requiring approval by the Legislature of all proposed appointments before they become effective.

For the first time in the history of the province, the Legislature would set the criteria for judicial appointments, and the Attorney General would be responsible to the Legislature for following them in each and every appointment. Surely it is time to take this process out of the backrooms and put it fully in the hands of all the elected representatives. Transparency and democracy do work.

This bill is substantially similar to one which I introduced in the second session of the Legislature.

#### REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACT, 2003

Mr Jackson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

1510

#### AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 SUR LE MOIS DE SENSIBILISATION À L'AUTISME

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to proclaim Autism Awareness Month /  
Projet de loi 9, Loi proclamant le Mois de sensibilisation à l'autisme.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** The bill proclaims October in each year as Autism Awareness Month. The passage of this bill will help those interested in autism issues to work with the government of Ontario, school boards and other entities to promote better understanding

and treatment of autism. This bill is similar to one that I introduced in the last session of the Legislature.

#### FIRE PREVENTION WEEK AND FIREFIGHTER RECOGNITION ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA SEMAINE DE PRÉVENTION DES INCENDIES ET LA RECONNAISSANCE DES POMPIERS

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to proclaim Fire Prevention Week, Firefighter Recognition Day and Firefighter Memorial Day /  
Projet de loi 10, Loi proclamant la Semaine de prévention des incendies, le Jour de reconnaissance des pompiers et le Jour de commémoration des pompiers.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** This bill proclaims the week in each year that begins on a Sunday and in which October 9 falls as Fire Prevention Week. It also proclaims the Saturday that is the last day in that week as Firefighter Recognition Day. These provisions reflect current practice. The bill also incorporates into it the existing provisions of the Firefighters' Memorial Day Act, 2000, so that all relevant provisions would be in one law. This is a modification of legislation that I introduced in the last session of the Legislature.

#### DEMOCRACY IN ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE LA DÉMOCRATIE EN ONTARIO

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to proclaim Democracy in Ontario Day /  
Projet de loi 11, Loi proclamant la Journée de la démocratie en Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** Prior to 1792, the French and British had successively governed Ontario with no elected Legislature. On September 17, 1792, the first elected Legislature of the province met. It was a truly fateful day in the history of our province. Ever since that day, an elected Legislature has met regularly to do the people's business.

This bill proposes to proclaim September 17 of each year as Democracy in Ontario Day. This will give our schools, Ministry of Citizenship and others the opportunity to recognize the importance of that day and that method of government. This bill is similar to one that I introduced in the second session of the Legislature.



PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO  
THE FACTS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003  
SUR L'ACCÈS DU PUBLIC AUX FAITS

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to amend the Public Inquiries Act /  
Projet de loi 12, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes  
publiques.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of  
the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** The short title of this  
bill is People's Access to the Facts Act. It amends the  
Public Inquiries Act to allow any member of the Legis-  
lative Assembly to propose a resolution to set up an  
inquiry into any matter that the act allows. The resolution  
either designates one or more persons who are to conduct  
the inquiry or requires the Speaker of the assembly or the  
Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint them. The  
assembly is required to vote on the resolution within 60  
sessional days after it is proposed.

This in effect gives the Legislature itself the same  
power to call inquiries as the cabinet now has. Surely this  
power should rest in the hands of all the elected repre-  
sentatives of the people. Democracy and transparency do  
work.

This bill is substantially similar to one which I  
introduced in the second session of the Legislature.

PROTECTION OF MINORS  
FROM SEXUALLY EXPLICIT  
GOODS AND SERVICES ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION  
DES MINEURS CONTRE LES BIENS  
ET SERVICES SEXUELLEMENT  
EXPLICITES

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to protect minors from exposure to  
sexually explicit goods and services / Projet de loi 13,  
Loi visant à protéger les mineurs contre les biens et  
services sexuellement explicites.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of  
the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** The purpose of this  
bill is to prevent those under 18 from being exposed to  
sexually explicit goods and services. It mandates the  
good practices already followed by most businesses in  
Ontario. If enacted, it would give a reasonable assurance  
to Ontario parents that their children will not be exposed  
to inappropriate influences of this nature. It is sub-  
stantially the same as a bill I introduced in the second  
session of the Legislature.

REMEMBRANCE DAY OBSERVANCE  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT  
LA LOI SUR L'OBSERVATION  
DU JOUR DU SOUVENIR

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Remembrance Day  
Observance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la  
Loi de 1997 sur l'observation du jour du Souvenir.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of  
the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** This bill grants  
employees the right to take a leave of absence from work  
without pay of three hours between 10 am and 1 pm on  
each Remembrance Day so that they may participate in  
observances for those who died serving their country in  
wars and in peacekeeping efforts.

This bill, if passed, will give almost everyone the  
chance to observe Remembrance Day in the way he or  
she feels is most appropriate. This bill is substantially  
similar to one I introduced in the second session of the  
Legislature.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO BUDGET

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance):** On March  
27, I had the privilege of presenting the 2003 Ontario  
budget directly to the people of Ontario. It was another  
positive way for the government to involve Ontarians in  
what is a very, very important process. Of course, all the  
appropriate documentation has been filed with the Clerk  
and will be there for the consideration, the debate and  
eventually the vote for the Legislative Assembly. I look  
forward to support from the members opposite on the tax  
relief proposals that we've put forward to benefit the  
citizens in Ontario.

1520

We listened to what people told us during the ex-  
tensive pre-budget consultations that we undertook, and  
we responded to what people told us was important to  
them. We responded with a balanced budget, our fifth  
straight balanced budget, something we haven't seen  
happen here in Ontario for years. We responded with  
more tax relief to help create more jobs in Ontario,  
another important priority for families, more invest-  
ments—

*Applause.*

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —yes, you can applaud that too—in  
health, in education, in supporting Ontario's seniors, and  
more money to pay down Ontario's debt.

The other significant thing about this budget is, as the  
Premier committed, we did it before the end of the fiscal

year, something I know the members opposite may not agree with, but something that our funding partners, our schools, our hospitals and our municipal partners said was extremely important. When we presented the budget, the people across the province had a further opportunity to respond directly. Democracy expects—demands—that we all participate, that citizens have the opportunity to participate. By launching the most extensive pre-budget consultations, we were able to encourage people and have people participate. I travelled to over 17 different communities. I talked to over 1,300 individuals who represented our school boards, our hospitals, our municipalities, our social agencies, members of the business community. We received over 450 written submissions with their advice and input.

That process of listening has continued with the most recent speech from the throne, which reflected the input from over 10,000 individuals who responded to us. It certainly reflects how the government intends to build on those priorities in setting its legislative agenda. But it is the budget that will provide the legislative framework for that agenda.

MPPs of course will hear it, will have the opportunity to debate, to discuss it, perhaps even to vote for some of the tax measures—I look forward to hearing where the Liberals are going to come from on this. But to listen to what the members of the House have to say about these initiatives—that is exactly what we are doing.

The 2003 Ontario budget reflects the priorities we heard from the people of Ontario. These priorities include: continuing tax relief to create jobs; to increase government accountability for the dollars we spend on behalf of taxpayers; to maintain our focus on priorities, such as health care, education, our seniors and strong, secure and safe communities; and to preserve prudent fiscal management of the province's finances, something we had not seen before we assumed power in 1995.

Again, the budget that we presented is our fifth consecutive balanced budget.

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** It's the first time since 1908.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's right. As the Premier has just said, no other government has balanced five straight budgets in Ontario since 1908.

Just as importantly, we have achieved our target. We've met the commitment we made to the people of Ontario to pay down \$5 billion on the debt. That is very, very important for Ontario taxpayers because every dollar that does not have to go into debt repayment is another dollar we can invest in meeting the priorities of Ontario's families.

Balancing a budget is a difficult task. It requires the government to consider the important priorities; to set key priorities that reflect the priorities of the people we are elected to represent; to make prudent forecasts about what we expect to occur during the fiscal year; to make the tough but necessary decisions to implement those priorities to balance the budget.

As we've witnessed recently, the uncertainty we've seen in the Middle East may well have eased, but we're certainly seeing the significant impact that the SARS outbreak has had here in Toronto and other parts of Canada. I would like to extend my thanks and congratulations to all of our public health workers, our health professionals and our Minister of Health.

We must be prepared for economic uncertainties to happen sometimes, as they have, and we have put in place with this budget the right fundamentals to help protect the provincial economy from such events.

While it is still too early to fully assess the impact of SARS on our economy, we are confident that with the resiliency, with the strength of Ontario's economy, with the SARS recovery package that we brought forward this week, our economic plan remains the right one for Ontario and will continue to promote growth, jobs and prosperity in this province.

We have put in place fundamentals like lower taxes to keep our economy strong, and with this budget we've shown that we're listening, that we care about what people want, what they need, what they expect from governments.

For example, people told us that they want us to honour, respect and thank our seniors for the contribution they have made to the success of this province, and in this budget we are certainly responding to what we heard. We have proposed a new \$450-million Ontario home property tax relief program for our seniors. We estimate that this program would provide an average net saving of \$475 annually for over 940,000 senior households.

People have told us they want us also to focus on health care, and again in this budget we responded. We are responding with a \$27.6-billion investment in health care. We've doubled the amount of health capital that we have been spending in the last two years to finish the job of expanding, modernizing and replacing our hospital system.

People have told us that they want us also to focus on education, and again in the budget we responded to help implement the recommendations from Dr Rozanski. This year we will invest \$15.3 billion in our public education system—the highest level of investment in Ontario's history and an investment that will help our students succeed.

People told us as well that they want us to continue focusing on tax cuts to create jobs, and again we're responding. We are confirming our commitment on personal income tax to complete the 20% tax reduction, as we promised, for January 1, 2004. This will provide about \$900 million in additional tax relief for our citizens. We are also proposing to eliminate the surtax for people earning less than \$75,000 per year. To reduce the job-killing tax rate, we're starting with a 10% reduction on January 1, 2004.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Capital tax rates, yes.

People have told us they want us to continue managing the province's finances in a fiscally prudent



manner, and again we've responded. We have said that we will identify and eliminate \$500 million in government waste and inefficiency and continue the task that we started when we were elected in 1995.

**1530**

When we first came to office in 1995, this province was in serious trouble. The government was spending over \$1 million more an hour than it was taking in. Jobs and investments were fleeing Ontario. We had one of the highest welfare rates—people trapped on welfare in Ontario. We faced a potential deficit of over \$11 billion.

I am pleased to say that those days are gone. We have consistently demonstrated our commitment to balancing the budget, investing in key priorities like health, education, safe and secure communities and managing the province's books responsibly. Our plan is working. It's producing results. Over 1.1 million net new jobs have been created in this province since 1995. There has been record debt repayment and five consecutive balanced budgets.

Yet we recognize on this side of the House that there is still much more to do. We will continue to focus on the priorities of the people of Ontario. We will continue investing in those priorities. Above all, we will continue to listen to the people of Ontario to ensure that our economic plan is addressing those priorities.

In the coming weeks, I will be introducing legislation implementing the budget initiatives, and I look forward to debating these measures with members of the House.

Leadership is about making choices, and this government has consistently shown leadership in making choices for the benefit of the people of Ontario; the right choices.

**The Speaker:** Responses?

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):**

Well, after listening to that, it is apparent that Comical Ali is alive and well and writing statements for this minister.

Apparently nobody in Ontario got it right when there was universal condemnation of this government's decision to present a budget in an auto parts factory.

Apparently Ontarians also got it wrong when they thought that it was important that in a parliamentary democracy, you deliver the budget inside the Parliament.

I want to tell you that we released our plan recently, Government That Works For You, and we had to include something in there which I never imagined would be necessary in this province. We had to include a specific commitment that said that when we deliver our budgets, we will deliver them inside this Legislature.

This government and this Premier and this Minister of Finance thought they could pull a fast one on the people of Ontario. They said the only people who are going to be interested in this kind of an issue as to where we deliver the budget would be pundits and columnists and people who pay only some distant, esoteric attention to these kinds of things. But I can tell you, the people of Ontario rose up and there was a visceral reaction to this government's abuse of their privileges.

I notice that the minister left out the second sentence in her statement. I'll recite it so that it's on the record. It says "This was a positive way for the government to involve Ontarians in this important process—it built on our democratic traditions." I can understand why the minister had some trouble delivering that one, and so left it out.

There is something positively Kafkaesque about what is happening here today, Minister. You don't understand what has been happening. You must have been on an extended tea break and not understood how angry Ontarians were when you decided to abuse not our privileges, although you did that, but abused their right to have their budget delivered inside this Legislature.

Let's speak for a moment about the substance of this infomercial budget. This is a government that, notwithstanding where we find ourselves at this point in our history, is intent on bringing a plan they brought to us in 1995, and they're now going to use the same plan in 2003. We can debate the merits of an aggressive tax-cut plan in 1995, but we need a plan for the future now, Premier. We don't need a plan from the past, because our world has changed. You may not have noticed, but our world has changed.

Let me just tell you how: 9/11 happened; the US economy is in a virtual stall; the dot-com bubble burst; Ontarians have lost literally billions of dollars in their retirement income; and SARS has affected this economy. If there is anything that prevails in the global economy today it is uncertainty, so you need an approach that is prudent and responsible, and we intend to bring that approach.

So instead of giving away \$3.2 billion in additional tax breaks to corporations, instead of putting half a billion dollars into private schools, instead of wasting \$250 million on partisan political self-promotional advertising, instead of putting \$600 million into private sector consultants, instead of refusing to follow up on corporations that have yet to pay their corporate taxes, we will invest in a plan that will support health care and education, protect our environment and invest in jobs and growth. We understand that in the knowledge economy, the jurisdiction with the best workers wins. So we're going to invest in Ontarians and give them the skills they need to compete and succeed in our Ontario.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I suspect that most of the people of Ontario—all the people of Ontario—wanted to see a budget presented to the Legislature and to the people of Ontario according to democratic fashion. But in the new world of Conservative government, this is all you get: a six-minute diatribe by the Minister of Finance; otherwise, she wants to do it by television infomercial. I say to the Minister of Finance, by that single act you have made one of the biggest political mistakes of your government's life and you will pay for it.

There were some things that jumped out of this television infomercial, and I believe the people of Ontario need to know what's really happening. The Minister

of Finance talks about property tax relief for seniors. Well, we already have a seniors' property tax credit in this province, and it's a seniors' property tax credit that is aimed at modest and lower-income people who are trying to pay their property taxes. What the Conservatives are talking about here is a property tax credit for Frank Stronach, Steve Stavro and all the rest of their wealthy pals. Imagine, people across Ontario: Frank Stronach, who has an income of \$53 million a year, who lives in a \$10-million mansion, needs financial help from this government to pay his property taxes. And guess what? He's going to get a \$42,000 cheque from this government to help him pay the property taxes on his \$10-million mansion.

1540

Here is the contrast. The lowest-paid workers in this province, people who work for minimum wage, have had their wages frozen for eight years by this government. For eight years you've frozen the minimum wage. Do you do anything about that? No. But you believe that Frank Stronach and the rest of his wealthy pals need government help to pay their property taxes. How ludicrous. How absurd. How unjust. And how unfair to people across this province.

The Minister of Finance wants to boast that the government has had five years of balanced budgets. Well, the people of Ontario deserve to know the truth. Last year, in order to give the appearance of a balanced budget, this government took over \$1 billion of federal money designed to provide for health care, federal money that was supposed to pay for health care next year and the year after, and they booked it all last year in order to cover up what was a deficit. This is exactly what Canadians complain about, that when this government gets money for health care from the federal government, they don't use it for health care; they use it to cover up their own financial mess.

Then there's this budget for 2003-04. They claim that it is balanced, but when you read the fine print, what does it say? It says that they're going to have to sell off over \$2 billion in public assets in order to give the appearance of having a balanced budget. This is like the farmer who sells off a piece of his farm every year in order to give the right impression to his friends and neighbours. But we all know what happens. Two or three years of that and you don't have a farm any more.

Last year, what you proposed to do to balance the budget was sell off Hydro One for \$2 billion. So what did we see in this year's budget? Oh, another \$2 billion in asset sales. The people of Ontario deserve to know that if this government gets re-elected, Hydro One is up for sale again. Hydro privatization hasn't ended under this government, and it won't under Liberals either, but it's very clear: if this government gets re-elected, Hydro One is up for sale again. I say to the Premier, you said yesterday in your throne speech that you wanted to consult the people. Call an election and consult them on whether or not they want Hydro One sold.

**Hon Mr Eves:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to have a moment of

silence for the victims of SARS in the province of Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Would all the members please rise, and our friends in the gallery as well, for a moment of silence.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

**The Speaker:** I thank all members and our friends in the gallery.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** I have a question today for the Premier. Premier, yesterday Ontarians learned that the real reason this Legislature has not sat for 138 days is because you don't have a plan for the future.

For eight years, your government has weakened our hospitals, attacked our schools, ignored the serious needs of our communities and turned its back on the environment. It's clear that you simply do not know how it is that you're going to undo all the damage that you and your government have done. We do.

Premier, while you have dithered, we have carefully worked, and worked very hard, to develop good plans for the people of Ontario, and our plans represent real, positive change. In our plans, we're talking about cleaner air, better public schools, better health care and good jobs for our children.

Premier, Ontarians want real, positive change. You have been failing to deliver that kind of change. When are going to start to deliver the kind of change that Ontarians really want?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Obviously the leader of the official opposition wasn't listening very carefully yesterday. Our throne speech indeed did lay out a plan and a vision for the people of Ontario, not just for this session but for many years to come.

He talks about health care. This government's commitment to health care is far in excess of any Liberal government in the history of Ontario—most recently the one of David Peterson. We are spending \$28.1 billion on health care this year in Ontario, far in excess of the Honourable Lyn McLeod's commitment to spend \$17.6 billion a year on health care in Ontario in the 1995 election campaign, and in spite of the fact that his country cousins in Ottawa, after their grandiose, well-advertised increase in their share, have still got it up to just under 17 cents for every dollar spent in Ontario. We know you agree with everything the Prime Minister does. Would you tell me, Mr Leader of the Opposition, sir, whether you agree with your country cousins' commitment?

**Mr McGuinty:** That highlights an important difference between you and me, Premier. You want to point



the finger of blame; I want to improve health care for the people of Ontario. If it's true that you are in fact spending more on health care, as you say, then you're giving Ontarians the worst of both worlds, because you're telling us you're spending more money and they're getting a poorer-quality health care.

You raised the matter of health care, Premier. Here is the truth: we are second from the bottom in Canada when it comes to our health care. On a per capita basis, we have the second-fewest nurses, the second-fewest doctors, the second-fewest hospital beds and, on a percentage of GDP, we have the second-lowest investment in health care in Canada. That's the truth. Those are the results of the choices that you have made. You continue to believe that putting \$3.2 billion into tax breaks for corporations and half a billion dollars into private schools is more important than health care. Our plan calls for not going ahead with those kinds of tax cuts and investing in health care, because that's a priority for us.

**Hon Mr Eves:** I hope the leader of the official opposition didn't spend four months dreaming up that question. The reality is that during Roy Romanow's commission on health care in this country, I had an opportunity to meet with Mr Romanow on three separate occasions, each of which was at least two hours in duration. On every single one of those occasions, he indicated to me that Ontario, by far, has the best health care system in Canada, bar none.

He talks about us not delivering on health care in Ontario. We are more committed to health care on this side of the House than any government in Ontario's history. We are spending close to 50% of the entire Ontario budget on health care, and the reason why we have \$10.5 billion more a year to spend on health care is because our \$16 billion worth of tax cuts has resulted in \$16 billion more a year in revenue to the province of Ontario.

**Mr McGuinty:** I'm glad, Premier, that you're paying some limited attention to what Commissioner Romanow had to say, but if you're truly attached to his recommendations and if you believe them, why is it you're going ahead with private MRIs and private CTs? Why are you going ahead with private hospitals in the province of Ontario? Mr Romanow came out against those things.

1550

As to the impact, then read the document, Premier, as I have done. Read the document.

Here is the other point with respect to your tax cuts. If you are so committed to health care, Premier, then why did you fire nurses by the thousands? Why did we have to pay \$375 million in severances for our nurses? Why is it that nurses today are very reluctant to come back to Ontario? Because you referred to them as Hula Hoop workers. Because you disrespected our nurses.

If you want our nurses to come back, Premier, then you know what you have to do. You have to give them full-time work and you have to give them respect. When

are you going to start to do that in the province of Ontario?

**Hon Mr Eves:** First of all, the leader of the official opposition might want to have the common decency to rise in the House later, stand up and say that I have never, not only in this House but anywhere, ever referred to nurses as Hula Hoop workers.

I want to say to the that we have created 12,000 nursing spaces in the province of Ontario. We are committed to creating another 8,000 over the next three years. We have created 350 nurse practitioner positions. We are paying tuition for people to go and take up nursing as a profession. We will create another 1,000 nurse practitioners in the next five years in the province of Ontario.

And by the way, for his information, Mr Romanow indicated to me on several occasions that privately owned and operated MRIs or any diagnostic procedure, or any treatment procedure such as kidney dialysis, as long as it is universally accessible, administered through the publicly funded OHIP plan in Ontario, falls perfectly within his criteria. I know that the leader of the official opposition would like to believe something else, but that in fact is what Mr Romanow believes.

## HEALTH CARE FUNDING

### **Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):**

My second question is also to the Premier. Premier, our doctors, our nurses and our health care professionals have been nothing less than heroic in their efforts to contain the SARS outbreak and they deserve our thanks. But they are going to need more than that; they are going to need our support.

Before SARS hit, some of our hospitals in the Toronto area were operating at a 95% to 100% occupancy level. We've been long telling you that there was no flexibility in the system to deal with a disaster or other kind of health care crisis.

Thanks to the professionalism and dedication of our front-line health care workers we managed, but we only just managed, Premier. Do you now understand that your cuts to hospitals went too deep? Do you now understand that you have closed too many beds and fired too many nurses? Will you admit that your cuts to health care are compromising our ability to properly manage a health care crisis?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I cannot believe that the leader of the official opposition would sink so low as to try to make political hay on the back of a situation like SARS. First of all, the health care professionals, starting with our public health officials, Dr Colin D'Cunha and Dr Young, the thousands upon thousands of front-line nurses, lab technicians, doctors, paramedics, police officers, researchers, scientists have worked tirelessly, night and day for weeks, to bring the crisis under control in the province of Ontario.

We have undertaken to support hospitals with any support they need. We have not attached a price tag to it,

and that is on top of the \$1 billion we raised hospital budgets by last year alone in this province. This government remains committed to doing whatever it takes to have plans for not only SARS, but an emergency plan for any viral infection or disease that might occur in the future. It's incumbent upon us to act responsibly. That's exactly what we've done here in Ontario.

**Mr McGuinty:** You might want to pay attention to what Dr Sheela Basrur has to say about this kind of thing. I'll quote from her: "It's called surge capacity, and that is something that has been systematically stripped from the system ... so the ability of public health, of hospitals, of governments in general to respond to an unforeseen crisis of large proportions is dramatically reduced when we have already cut ourselves to the bone."

This is not politics; it's the result of you having made cuts to health care, the broader health care system. What we're talking about, and these are the words used by Dr Sheela Basrur, is "we have already cut ourselves to the bone." Will you now admit that what has happened in Ontario on your watch and during the past eight years is that you have placed our public health system, in particular, in a position where it simply cannot properly manage in the face of a health care crisis?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I don't know where the leader of the official opposition invents his numbers, but I can tell you that in the fiscal year 1995-96, when we assumed government, hospital spending by the province was \$7.3 billion a year, and this year it is exactly \$3 billion a year higher, at \$10.3 billion a year. Only a Liberal who doesn't understand anything about numbers, who doesn't understand that you can't spend \$15 billion a year more than you take in, who ran up the provincial debt when they were in office, could make such a ridiculous statement.

**Mr McGuinty:** How is it that you forget you closed thousands of hospital beds? That's what capacity is all about. How is it that you forgot you fired nurses by the thousands? That's also an aspect of capacity. How is it that you forgot you shut down hospitals and shut down emergency rooms? That's all about capacity. It's about the ability of our health care system to manage in the face of a health care crisis.

We've got a plan, and you should take a look at our plan. We would reopen 1,600 hospital beds. We would hire nurses. We would recruit nurses by giving them what they need: respect and full-time, permanent employment. Instead of just promising to hire nurse practitioners, we would actually hire nurse practitioners. We've got a real plan to improve health care. Why don't you take a good look at our plan? Why don't you adopt our plan? That's what the people of Ontario happen to be looking for.

**Hon Mr Eves:** Virtually every hospital in this province has seen significant capital infrastructure improved, or indeed the entire hospital rebuilt, in virtually every region of this province in the last few years. This year alone we are spending over \$500 million on capital improvements to hospitals alone.

I might listen to the leader of the official opposition if he actually made some sense and had the decency and forthrightness to quote actual facts instead of rhyming off numbers he makes up. Speaking of numbers, he has a 29-page document on the future of the economy of Ontario—his election platform—and not one, single number in it. You won't have to worry about budget day; there will be no numbers in your budget.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Speaker: Considering the length of time it took during that period, I would seek unanimous consent to give the leader of the third party two questions.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek the consent of the House to have the full question period today.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Pursuant to standing order 30(b), I'm now required to move to orders of the day.

1600

## ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Just before the government House leader calls orders of the day, I'm also required to announce royal assent.

I beg to inform the House that on December 13, 2002, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to the following bills of the previous session in his office.

**Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman):** The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Marriage Act / *Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le mariage*;

Bill 128, An Act to permit the naming of highway bridges and other structures on the King's Highway in memory of police officers who have died in the line of duty / *Projet de loi 128, Loi permettant de nommer des ponts et d'autres constructions situées sur la route principale à la mémoire des agents de police décédés dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions*;

Bill 129, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / *Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario*;

Bill 151, An Act respecting the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation / *Projet de loi 151, Loi concernant la Société de revitalisation du secteur riverain de Toronto*;

Bill 175, An Act respecting the cost of water and waste water services / *Projet de loi 175, Loi concernant le coût des services d'approvisionnement en eau et des services relatifs aux eaux usées*;



Bill 180, An Act to enact, amend or revise various Acts related to consumer protection / Projet de loi 180, Loi édictant, modifiant ou révisant diverses lois portant sur la protection du consommateur;

Bill 186, An Act to further highway safety and establish consumer protection through the regulation of the collision repair industry, and to make a complementary amendment to the Insurance Act / Projet de loi 186, Loi visant à améliorer la sécurité sur les voies publiques et à protéger les consommateurs en réglementant le secteur de la réparation en cas de collision et à apporter une modification complémentaire à la Loi sur les assurances;

Bill 195, An Act respecting safe drinking water / Projet de loi 195, Loi ayant trait à la salubrité de l'eau potable;

Bill 209, An Act respecting funerals, burials, cremations and related services and providing for the amendment of other statutes / Projet de loi 209, Loi traitant des funérailles, des enterrements, des crémations et des services connexes et prévoyant la modification d'autres lois;

Bill 216, An Act respecting access to information, the review of expenses and the accountability of Cabinet ministers, Opposition leaders and certain other persons / Projet de loi 216, Loi concernant l'accès à l'information ainsi que l'examen des dépenses et l'obligation de rendre compte des ministres, des chefs d'un parti de l'opposition et de certaines autres personnes;

Bill 229, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the public service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2003 / Projet de loi 229, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2003;

Bill 231, An Act to amend the repeal date of the Edible Oil Products Act / Projet de loi 231, Loi modifiant la date d'abrogation de la Loi sur les produits oléagineux comestibles;

Bill Pr1, An Act respecting the Tilbury Area Public School and the William J. Miller Trust;

Bill Pr9, An Act respecting The Elliott;

Bill Pr11, An Act respecting the Town of Erin;

Bill Pr17, An Act respecting the Reena Foundation.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I have the business of the House for next week before I call the order.

Pursuant to standing order 55, I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

Tuesday afternoon will be the Liberal opposition day. Thursday morning, during private members' public business, we will discuss ballot item 3, standing in the name of Mr Tascona, and ballot item 4, standing in the name of Mr Sorbara. The rest of the sittings will be occupied by throne speech debate.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I move, seconded by Mr Gill, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario,

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech from the throne Your Honour presented to us yesterday.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Mr Dunlop moves, seconded by Mr Gill, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

Debate?

**Mr Dunlop:** Today I will be sharing my time and my remarks with the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, Mr Raminder Gill.

It is indeed a privilege and an honour to move the adoption of the speech from the throne on behalf of the people I represent in the great riding of Simcoe North.

I would like to say a few words about His Honour James K. Bartleman. The fact of the matter is Mr Bartleman is a former resident of the riding of Simcoe North and, as many people here know, His Honour is also the first aboriginal Lieutenant Governor in the history of the province of Ontario. I was pleased, as a member of this assembly, to see Mr Bartleman appointed to this position and I'm also pleased that he has taken such an active role in his concerns with the aboriginal communities across our great province. I was pleased that he was appointed to this position and I thank him for his comments in the speech from the throne yesterday.

I was also pleased that I was joined, as my guest in the House yesterday, by Mr Tony Belcourt, the president of the Métis Nation of Ontario. With Mr Belcourt, I had an opportunity to have lunch yesterday with one of our pages who is here today, Ms Natalie King of the town Victoria Harbour, and her mother, Cyndi. They are both members of Métis Nation of Ontario.

I was very pleased to take part in the throne speech consultations. In fact, as was mentioned in the speech and was mentioned yesterday in our correspondence, over 10,000 people took an active role in giving consultation advice to the Premier on the speech from the throne. I was particularly pleased to be part of the Premier's consultation process that led to the development of yesterday's throne speech. In my role of parliamentary

assistant to the Premier, I actually visited seven communities in rural Ontario to seek advice and input for the throne speech. People in small communities like Picton, Selby, Faraday, Cornwall, Winchester, Paris and Oakwood will be happy to know that the Eves government is acting on their comments.

An example was a gentleman I met from Picton. I was so pleased that Mr William Conley, who happens to be deaf, came to the throne speech consultations and had a series of notes that he asked me to read into the record. One of the concerns that Mr Conley had was that he asked if we could increase the Ontario disability support program. That, as you know, was part of our consultations and part of the throne speech plan that we introduced yesterday. We listened and we were acting on his suggestion.

I am particularly pleased that our government in the coming weeks will unveil a comprehensive rural strategy aimed at addressing the concerns of people in rural Ontario communities, just like the ones I visited in the first three weeks of April. With this strategy, we will strengthen the rural economy, protect services, and preserve the way of life that is so important to rural Ontario.

I listened to a lot of concerns in my consultations in my own riding. I met with agricultural stakeholders, a very, very important part of the riding of Simcoe North and of most of the province of Ontario. I met with school councils. I met with building associations and I listened to their concerns. Of course, we all listen to the people from the chambers of commerce and the business community as we look to strengthen this great province of ours.

1610

A number of points were raised in the throne speech, and I'd like to dwell on a few of those for a couple of minutes.

First of all, providing an additional 17 tax cuts for seniors, businesses and wage earners: I was so pleased to hear of the education portion of the property tax being removed for seniors. It's something that in my years in municipal politics I heard over and over again. So many seniors have paid tax all of their lives on their farms, their businesses and of course on their homes, and I think this is a great opportunity, as a result of our budget, for our seniors to finally get a break. I believe \$450 million will be given back to the seniors of our great province.

The throne speech also commented on introducing legislation to allow seniors to retire at a time of their choosing. I think we are all so familiar with people who are put in that position. Many people like to take an early retirement, retiring at 52 or 54 or 57 years of age, some up to 65, but other people I know like to continue to work. I met a gentleman just this week who is 75 years old. He sells lighting equipment across our province and he just does not want to retire. I think there are many people in that position across our province who have a lot of energy and a lot to offer when you think that at the same time, with a strong economy, in a lot of cases we

need those people. We need them badly for the jobs that are out there. You can walk into many of our department stores today, companies like Wal-Mart, and see the people who are taking advantage of some of these jobs. They like to be there, they like to be an active part of their community, and they like to get up every morning and go to work and have a job.

The throne speech is also providing a special benefit to meet the unique needs of children who require helping hands and, as I said earlier, increasing the Ontario disability support program payments to help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and dignified lives. I mentioned earlier about Mr William Conley, who came to our throne speech consultations, and some other constituents of mine who have come forward and also made comments on the need for some additional funding to be put into the disability support program.

The throne speech is also introducing a comprehensive approach to Ontario's energy sector, including increasing supply, creating an integrated conservation plan and ensuring that pricing is stable. We've made that commitment.

As I mentioned earlier, we are announcing a comprehensive rural strategy aimed at addressing the concerns raised by people in our rural communities. I think something we have to spend a lot of time on, as Ontarians, as citizens of our country, is the need to strengthen the rural economy of our provinces, and of course we're mostly concerned here about the province of Ontario. We heard over and over again about the need for keeping young people in their communities, about the need for continuing with programs down the road—like the rural economic development program—programs that have helped many of our ridings across this province. We heard that in Quinte West. That was one of the concerns that the chamber of commerce brought forward down there. They needed to see some type of economic stimulus in the future, very similar to what we have in programs like the rural economic development program.

The throne speech also dealt with things like quality health care, pledging to help hospitals deal with SARS-related backlogs, compensate workers and protect and promote our economy.

First of all, on the quality health care issue, I'd like to talk a little bit about the quality of the health care workers we have here in Ontario. During the SARS outbreak, I think they have really come to the top of their pinnacle. I can hardly imagine how well they have performed. Even in my riding of Simcoe North, where we were originally identified as one of the areas, very similar to the GTA, our emergency plans immediately went to work. Our medical officers of health, our fire chiefs, our mayors, the CAOs of our municipalities, along with our hospital administrators—these people did a phenomenal job. I think they were a spinoff of people like Dr D'Cunha and Dr Young, who, by the way, is a Simcoe county resident.

I think that we in this Legislature and we in the province of Ontario owe a great deal of thanks to these



people. They've performed above their call of duty. I know we've had a number of thank yous in the House today and over the last couple of days, but I just wanted to put my personal thank you to the people, not only here in the province but particularly to the people in my own riding of Simcoe North.

The throne speech also called for the province to be engaging with Ontario's health care professionals in developing guaranteed wait times for such things as general surgery, cataract procedures, cancer treatments and MRIs. As the government, we are also launching an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program, as well as breaking down barriers faced by nurse practitioners to expand their numbers and the range of services that they are able to provide. We're improving access to doctors by increasing the number of international medical graduates training to practise here in Ontario by an amazing amount of 20%. We are also providing free tuition for current and future medical school students who agree to practise in underserved areas or join family health networks. As part of our budget and as part of the throne speech, we are investing nearly \$6.5 million to support the Electronic Child Health Network North.

I think one of the things that's most important is that we are investing \$1 billion in a new cancer research institute here in the province of Ontario. I think this is an area that is very important to everyone in this assembly and probably every family in the province of Ontario. There are very few people who have not been touched by the loss of someone to cancer, whether it's a family member or a friend.

I had the opportunity last Saturday to take part in the media launch for the Relay for Life for the Canadian Cancer Society up in Orillia. It's a relay that will be taking place in January. Many people were there promoting the fact that we need to get as many people as possible actively involved in this Relay for Life, primarily for two reasons: one, it brings awareness to the fact that we need to do fundraising and it brings so many people together with a common interest. As well, I think it's important to note that we in the county of Simcoe are looking forward to, at some point, having a cancer care centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. It's a program that Mr Wilson, Mr Tascona and myself are all working toward, along with the network hospitals in Simcoe county. We hope that someday in the near future we'll have that announcement and we'll be able to work toward having a cancer care centre right in the city of Barrie.

We're committing, in our throne speech, in our budget and in some announcements last year, to an additional 20 MRIs and five new CT scanners. I am very pleased to hear this announcement. I know that previous to the Harris government being elected, in the 10 years before that, there was a total of 12 MRIs in all of the province of Ontario, six under the Peterson government and six under the Rae government. I believe we now have 41 under our government, and the plan for 20 new MRIs and five new CT scanners is an addition to the services that we have

here in the province of Ontario. I can tell you again, on a personal note, in my riding of Simcoe North we have a lot of interest in having an MRI machine. One of my top priorities in the next five to 10 years is to make sure one of these is installed, either a private or a hospital MRI, somewhere in my riding. I'm more than happy to work with the Ministry of Health in getting all the criteria needed so that we can have our own MRI. Currently there is the one in Barrie, and there was one recently announced, I believe, in Owen Sound, to help look after the service of MRI requirements in Simcoe county and Grey county.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the excellence in education portion of the throne speech. I know that education is always a topic of interest, and of course it's always a topic in throne speeches. But certainly the fact that we are creating more than 135,000 new post-secondary student places—and it's the largest capital investment in Ontario's universities and colleges since the 1960s. I'd like to say that we're very fortunate that Georgian College—which is our only post-secondary facility in Simcoe county—is receiving about 2,500 of those new student places. The facility is under construction right now. I'm sure it will be open by early September.

1620

It's interesting to note that we have the interest in this project, as well as future projects that we'd like to expand. Our board of directors and our administration at Georgian College has done a wonderful job in Simcoe county, Muskoka and parts of Grey county in servicing the students of that area as they continue to not only expand the Barrie campus but to look after the future expansion of the Orillia, Midland and Collingwood campuses as well.

The government is also, through the throne speech and the last budget, providing an extra \$1.6 billion for special education for the year 2002-03 to make sure that these children have the help they need to learn and succeed. I think anybody who has not been in a classroom in the province of Ontario for a few years should visit our classrooms and see the impact that special education students have on our school system. I know we always seem to require more money in that area, and I was going to give some figures in a few minutes about the amount of money that our board is spending on special education. I continue to think it's a vital area for our school system. But it's also a very expensive part of our system as well.

The budget is also allowing athletes, musicians, artists and tradespeople to act as expert instructors or volunteers in their particular fields. The throne speech acknowledges the fact that we're giving parents more choice to enrol their children in any available school within their boards. Of course, a keynote to this is that schools will still give first placement priority to students who live closest nearby.

I also want to point out that the throne speech is providing tools and resources to ensure that phonics are available to all schools and to encourage higher achieve-

ment in math by offering elementary school teachers scholarships to become math specialists.

Interestingly, also in the throne speech, we're increasing the annual investment in colleges and universities and demanding better accountability for those results.

From my perspective, as someone who has come from a construction background, a trades background, a trades businessperson, I really liked the part in the throne speech and our budget encouraging young people to seek rewarding and exciting careers in the skilled trades.

I'd like to point out—and this is one of the things I'm most proud of in my political life, and I do want to read a little bit of this into the comments today. I did a consultation for Minister Ecker last year when I was her parliamentary assistant. Part of the budget calls for building skills for a growing economy. It's on page 12.

It reads: "Ontario's economic surge is also increasing the need for skilled workers throughout the province. In an excellent report"—and I stress "excellent"—"released last year, Garfield Dunlop, MPP for Simcoe North, recognized that meeting this need starts in schools. That is why we are investing \$90 million in our high schools over the next four years to renew technological equipment, to train teachers and to develop partnerships with employers and colleges. Since 2000, we have invested \$120 million to revitalize the apprenticeship system and to double the number of people entering apprenticeships. Today, I am proposing to create a new refundable apprenticeship tax credit for employers that would create jobs and increase the supply of skilled-trades workers in Ontario."

This is something that I am very pleased with, because one of the problems we've had over the years in the construction industry, and in fact in the manufacturing industry as well, is that whenever we have apprentices on staff, in a lot of cases, after they receive their journeyman's papers, they often leave and go on to other jobs. This, I think, is an opportunity to at least subsidize the employer somewhat for the training of that young person; or in a lot of cases, they're actually middle-aged people who go back to trades. But certainly it's important that we acknowledge the fact that we need more people to take apprentices on to their staff, and I think the apprenticeship tax credit will be an excellent opportunity over the foreseeable future to implement what I consider to be a program that will train a lot of young and skilled tradespeople for the province of Ontario.

**Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** Garfield Dunlop did that.

**Mr Dunlop:** Thank you very much. It's very nice of Mr Flaherty to say that.

Before we leave education, I'd like to talk a little bit about the funding we've received in our boards over the last few months. I have two large, growing boards in my riding. For example, when I first entered provincial politics in 1999-2000, the Simcoe County District School Board had 50,774 students enrolled in it. Today, the number of students who will be entering that school

board next fall will be somewhere around 52,178, or about a 3% increase. It's interesting to note that in that same time, in those four years, our total funding for all purposes to that board alone has gone from \$315.69 million to a total of \$380.92 million—a \$65-million increase, or 20.7%. So we've seen a 3% increase in enrolment and a 20.7% increase in total funding to the board.

It's also interesting to note that in that same time period, special education funding has gone from \$27.7 million to \$45.42 million. A lot of that has to do with Dr Rozanski and his recommendations. I applaud him for his report. We, of course, are implementing all of the Rozanski recommendations. Something that was important to me was the opportunity to meet with Dr Rozanski and talk about the issues in my riding. At first, I didn't think that meeting would happen last fall, but I did have a great opportunity. I spent about an hour and a half with Dr Rozanski in a meeting and I enjoyed his company. I know that a lot of his recommendations were listened to, and we were certainly very pleased with the outcome of that. The thing that I think is most important about Dr Rozanski's report is that he did not allow the school boards to go back and start to tax the municipalities again. That was unacceptable before and it's unacceptable today, in my opinion.

**Interjection:** That's what the Liberals want.

**Mr Dunlop:** Yes, I think the opposition parties would like to allow the taxes to go back in.

Something else I want to talk about with education is the new schools. As you know, the Ministry of Education is continually assessing the quality of our schools and that means how well they fit with the building code and the heating and ventilating requirements, the electrical codes etc. We've been fortunate just recently that four of our older school in the Simcoe County District School Board have been allowed to have a replacement factor built into them. I'm particularly pleased that in my riding I was allowed two of them: Parkview school in Midland and Mount Slaven public school in the city of Orillia.

I'd like to go back again to my notes. When we're dealing with the throne speech, we also have to talk about having good government, and this throne speech is introducing legislation to provide quality auditors for health, education and municipal services, to ensure that high-quality, effective services are delivered and that that funding is used for its intended purposes.

We are requiring unions to operate on principles of democracy, transparency and accountability. We are committing to find new ways to improve and modernize our democratic institutions, such as the consultation process that resulted in the throne speech.

**1630**

Safe and working communities: we're working with Smart Growth panel leaders and citizens—this is part of the throne speech as well—to carry out the vision of orderly local development. We're introducing legislation that will impose lifetime suspension upon a second drunk driving conviction and the direct vehicle seizure in



appropriate cases. When we were doing the consultations for the ignition interlock bill, it was something that many, many people wanted to see done. At this point you can get away with a second offence and have a three-year suspended licence, but many stakeholders, including Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Canadian Automobile Association, wanted to see tighter controls and penalties.

I think this is a step in the right direction. It shows the strong leadership that we have here in Ontario, not only through our Ministry of Public Safety and Security but through our Ministry of Transportation as well.

Part of the throne speech is that we will be providing a \$1-billion capital injection to help start the Ontario opportunity bonds. That program is to help municipal infrastructure and the investments they will have.

I'd like to say as I close—I'm going to turn it over to Mr Gill—that since 1995, Ontario has undergone a remarkable transformation. Our reforms have created new growth and have created over 1,100,000 net new jobs. We remain committed to our plan to keep our province strong. Ontarians have told us they are hopeful about our province's future. Only strong and experienced leadership will protect and expand the gains we have made so we can all enjoy the promises of Ontario.

This throne speech is about protecting the gains our government has made for a strong and prosperous province. It's about keeping Ontario's economy strong so that we can continue to put tax dollars into priorities like health care and education: \$28 billion in health care and \$16 billion in education. The money doesn't fall off the trees; you have to have a strong economy to pay those bills. Over on the opposite side there are many people. I don't know if they know math. It's the strong economy that makes this province go. The fact is that people have to be working. That's why the 1,100,000 new jobs are critical to Ontario and its future.

Ontarians have experienced what can happen when the economy is weak. All you have to do is look back to the lost decade of "Tax and spend, tax and spend." We can't go back there. I applaud the Premier for coming forth with a throne speech like this. I thank the Lieutenant Governor for delivering the speech yesterday and I look forward to further debate on this.

I thank Mr Gill. I'm going to turn it over to him now. Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to be here today.

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** It's a pleasure for me to rise today to second this motion in response to the speech from the throne. Of course I echo the comments from the honourable member for Simcoe North. He did speak very eloquently about not only the tradition of the throne speech but also the content, which was so nicely delivered by Lieutenant Governor James K. Bartleman. We must comment on the way the Lieutenant Governor arrived at the Legislature: in a very traditional way, in the landau. I thought it was perhaps a thunderstorm, but I later realized it was a traditional cannon salute; I'm not sure what it was but it

was great. I'm very happy that it was delivered in a very nice way.

I was happy to see some of my constituents in the audience as well: Frank and Olive Russell, who are senior citizens. The Premier came one day to my riding and we delivered the seniors' tax credit. As we grow older, I'm sure we'll all benefit from that.

I would like to start by thanking the voters of Ontario who placed their confidence in this government, who support our policies, our plans for the future, which is what the throne speech is all about.

In the throne speech, as you know, His Honour spoke of this government's commitment to a strong economy. This government's economic agenda has been seen in my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Companies like Coca-Cola, who have their largest bottling plant in North America; Hostess Frito-Lay; Canadian Tire; Kord Products Inc; Taro Pharmaceuticals; Mandarin restaurants; Loblaw's head office; Orenda Aerospace Corp; and DaimlerChrysler have all either expanded their operations or opened a new location. The 50% reduction in provincial income tax has resulted in an additional \$500 million that taxpayers have put back into the local economy in the region of Peel alone.

This government has created over one million—and I think it's worth repeating—over one million jobs since 1995. We have paid down the provincial debt by \$5 billion. Sometimes one talks about, "Promises made, promises kept." I think we not only met this promise—we said we were going to create 825,000 jobs—but we're happy to report that we created more than one million jobs. We did say we were going to decrease the debt by \$2 billion. We not only met that, we exceeded it and decreased the debt by \$5 billion.

The Ontario economy outperforms all G7 countries including the US—and again it's worth repeating—including the US. We're leading the pack. A lot of times you will hear rhetoric from the opposition that we are dependent on the US and tied to their economy, and because they're going up, we're going up and because they're going down, we're going down. No, that is not the case. We are leading the pack. Our economy is growing more than any of the G7 countries. The unemployment rate in Ontario is 6.7%, down from 10% when we took over as the government in 1995.

Providing an additional 17 tax cuts for seniors, businesses and wage earners—as I mentioned earlier, Olive Russell, a senior citizen in my riding, was quoted in yesterday's throne speech as saying that seniors appreciate receiving a break after so many years of contributing to this province—introducing legislation to allow seniors to retire at a time of their choosing; providing a special benefit to meet the unique needs of children who require a helping hand; increasing Ontario's disability support program payments to better help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and dignified lives.

I think it's very important that ODSP payments are going to be increased. It had not been done before.

Coincidentally, a couple of days ago I was talking to one of my constituents who did bring up that concern again to me. I'm happy to report back to her that perhaps one could say that because of her call and the calls of many other constituents we are going to be listening and we are going to be doing the right thing, as we always do.

1640

Introducing a comprehensive approach to Ontario's energy sector, including increasing supply, creating an integrated conservation plan and ensuring that pricing is stable—I'll admit I was as wasteful as, I'm sure, members on the other side. I always said that when you go home, put the lights on, because the house has to look lived in. But with energy prices going up, we have to start conserving, and I'm pleased to be saying that—

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum present, sir?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** I'm not sure, but I'll have somebody check and see.

**Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman):** Quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

**Mr Gill:** We were discussing energy, before we were disrupted from my train of thought, and how much more we need energy. We want to continue making sure that companies like Sithe Energy of Oswego, New York, plan to build a generating station using clean, natural gas in my riding. They are going to be spending about \$1 billion and producing, I understand, about 650 megawatts of energy. I'm sure they'll be very happy to hear that we are going to support the creation of more energy and the companies that are going to be coming on line, and announcing a comprehensive rural strategy aimed at addressing the concerns raised by the people in rural communities.

It is through this government's efforts that after 30 years of waiting, the constituents in my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and those of the ridings of Mr Clement and Mr Spina, will finally get a new hospital in my riding, at Bramalea Road and Bovaird Drive in Brampton, part of the William Osler group. This hospital is going to be the biggest community-based hospital in Canada, with 608 beds. I'm very, very pleased that it is coming to my riding, at Bramalea Road and Bovaird Drive. We're looking forward to it. This hospital will be an ultramodern facility, featuring state-of-the-art equipment, and will consist of three distinct blocks: an in-patient tower, a diagnostic-therapeutic wing with a revolutionary emergency department, and an out-patient ambulatory care block.

It will house, as I said, 608 beds and 20 operating rooms, and will have the capacity to handle 160,000 ambulatory care visits and 89,000 emergency department visits each year.

The new hospital will also offer programs and services such as mental health services, ambulatory oncology

services, cardiac procedures suite, cardio-respiratory and electro-diagnostic services, child and adolescent mental health, critical care dialysis, maternal-newborn services, pediatrics and many more. It is going to be a comprehensive hospital. I'm very pleased to say that we will be starting the construction very, very soon, I believe within the next four to five weeks, as I understand it.

It is because of this government's efforts that many constituents will see the current Brampton Memorial Hospital redeveloped to include a 112-bed complex, continuing care beds, modern emergency and ambulatory care, an eye institute, out-patient surgery and rehabilitation.

There was some concern as we went ahead with the construction of the new hospital as to what would happen to the current Peel Memorial Hospital, which is also part of the William Osler Health Centre. There was some discussion that we may have to abandon it because it may not be up to standard. But we are happy to say that the government is going to be spending money because the need is there; the need is great. We have expanding communities. In fact, I believe my riding is one of the fastest-expanding communities in the whole of Canada. I do want to welcome the new constituents. I have been meeting them as they occupy their new homes. I'm very pleased that they are happy that the hospital is coming close to them, for their children and for themselves.

There is the building of over 1,100 new long-term-care beds in Brampton. This government has increased health care spending by \$8 billion since 1995, from \$17.4 billion to \$25.5 billion. Last year alone, spending increased by 7.3%. Hospital budgets increased in 2002 by 7.7%, to \$9.4 billion. There are new MRI units and dialysis services at our local hospital, as we promised. Promises made, promises kept. We invested \$9.5 million in the Carlo Fidani Peel Regional Cancer Centre.

This government will continue to launch an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program as well as break down barriers faced by nurse practitioners to expand their numbers and the range of services they are able to provide, and improve access to doctors by increasing the number of international medical graduates training to practise in Ontario by 20%. I'm pleased to say, as you may know, my wife is an international medical graduate. She has been working for the last 20 years with the Credit Valley Hospital. I'm happy to say that some of the people you saw this morning driving limos and cabs, many of them, are international medical graduates. In expanding this service from, as you know, 12 to 24, and now to 150 per year, in the next four years, we will have more than 600 international medical graduates who can practise, and they'll be providing their much-needed services to Ontario residents.

There is the provision of free tuition for current and future medical school students who agree to practise in underserved areas or join family health networks. This is the sort of program that I know the army has. If you join the army and you want to become a doctor, they will pay your fees as long as you work for the army for a



certain number of years, perhaps. So this is going to be a well-liked program. I know there's a lot of excitement, because fees are expensive, and this is going to give them incentive. Hopefully they will take that and spend some time in the beautiful north or in the underserved areas.

There is investment of nearly \$6.5 million to support the Electronic Child Health Network North and to maintain the excellent Telehealth network launched by Minister Clement that has helped thousands of Ontarians while relieving pressures on our emergency rooms, CCACs and urgent care clinic facilities. I was happy to see an over-the-network type of surgery that can now take place. I was happy to join Dr Fuller at Sick Kids hospital, who demonstrated how far-reaching and excellent surgeries can be performed over the wire, if you want to call it that.

We will commit to an additional 20 MRIs and five new CT scanners.

The Peel Board of Education, which I believe is the second largest board of education in our province, has a budget that has increased by over \$188 million since 1997, and 1997 was the year when the new student-focused funding model was introduced. The total budget is now over \$857 million, a 22% increase.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic board's budget increased by \$169 million since 1997. Their total budget is now at \$603 million.

We have improved the new school capital funding formula to help build more than 37 new schools in Brampton, the most in the history of our province. For example, Peel board is building 15 elementary schools and eight new high schools in Brampton, creating space for over 10,400 new students. Total funding for these new schools exceeds \$105 million.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board is building seven elementary schools and seven new high schools in Brampton, creating space for over 7,400 students. Total funding for these schools now exceeds \$95 million.

People talk about closing schools and this and that; I'm happy to report that we are going to be building schools, because the need is there. Families in fact are quite happy that schools are being built and the kids are getting spaces close to their homes.

1650

We have made an immediate \$250-million investment this year for special education, as recommended by the report of Dr Rozanski.

We are creating more than 135,000 new post-secondary student places, the largest capital investment in Ontario universities and colleges since the 1960s. As you know, my previous assignment was as a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I was quite happy to consult universities all over the province, and I'm happy to say that despite the doom and gloom of the opposition parties that the double cohort students will not get any spaces, I understand the universities are very happy. My younger daughter is part of the double cohort program, and she has been getting acceptance letters from each and every university she

applied to. I'm not sure which one she is going to choose. She also had a full scholarship from the University of Toronto, which is board, room, fees and you name it, but I don't know if she's going to take that or not. I hope she does. It will be less expensive for me, but I'm not quite sure whether she will or not. As I said, we have created more than 135,000 new post-secondary student places.

We have provided \$1.6 billion for special education for 2002-03 to make sure that these children have the help they need to learn and succeed, and we will allow athletes, musicians, artists and tradespeople to act as expert instructors or volunteers.

We are giving parents more choice to enrol their children in any available school within their board. Schools will still give first placement priority to students who live nearby.

One of my pet peeves—and it's my opinion—is that I think all students should have uniforms. Again, that's something where perhaps more needs to be done. I know we've given the parents the choice. If they want to work with their student councils or parent councils, they can, but I think we should encourage that. We should keep reminding people, because the parents I've talked to like the idea. They don't really know that they have the power to choose that, so I think we need to emphasize it. I think it will give the students a pride in their school. It will distinguish them from other schools. There will be healthy competition, and of course there will be discipline in the schools. I'm hoping that more and more schools, more and more parents, take advantage of that tool we've given them to go ahead with that.

Talking about tools, we're providing tools and resources to ensure phonics are available to all schools, and encouraging higher achievement in math by offering elementary school teachers scholarships to become math specialists. I know it is very important to have the basics: reading, writing and arithmetic, as they say. I know in the past we had gone away from that. We had gone to child-centred learning: "Let the child do whatever they want to." I'm of the old school. I think they have to have the basics. The foundation has to be there. Only then will these kids learn the higher education.

I'm very pleased that we did bring in standardized testing. How else do you know how well the kids are doing? I understand that in the developed world, we are number five in the world. I think we used to be number 37 or whatever, so I'm quite pleased that we are making that progress. If you didn't have standardized testing, how else would you know how well a school is doing, how well a teacher is doing? The rest of the world was having standardized testing, and I'm happy to say that we have brought that in and it's working out quite well.

We're encouraging young people to seek rewarding and exciting careers in the skilled trades. As Mr Dunlop said earlier, he did a consultation across the province last year with the schools. I did a consultation with the trade colleges, if you want to call them that, and we have a report coming that highlights that we need to bring awareness not only to the schools and colleges but also

with the parents. Sometimes we feel that trades are not for our kids. Sometimes we feel that our kids only need to go to university. But I think people who learn trades reap good rewards. It's a good living and they make good money. It is very important for us to have tradespeople to make sure that our economy is growing. We need skilled tradespeople.

We have provided \$14 million to Peel Regional Police to hire 124 new front-line police officers. We've increased RIDE grants to Peel police to help stop drinking and driving. We've improved our drinking and driving laws to make them among the strongest in North America, including the introduction of ignition interlocking units.

We've built a new \$17-million courthouse in Brampton, a new Brampton specialized domestic violence court, and introduced the Amber Alert program on 400-series highway signs to help track down abducted children. We've introduced the CERV program in Brampton. It was the first community that came forward with that program. The CERV program—community emergency response volunteers—is part of Ontario's emergency preparedness. We've created both police and firefighter memorials at Queen's Park, to remember our fallen heroes. We've created Canada's first sex offender registry under legislation as Christopher's Law. Its name commemorates Christopher Stephenson, an 11-year-old boy who was killed in 1988 by a convicted pedophile out on statutory release. We are working with Smart Growth panel leaders and citizens to carry out their vision of orderly local development. Mayor McCallion, I know, chaired that panel. They have brought forward a report which is being well received, and hopefully the government will follow that through.

We are introducing legislation that would impose a lifetime licence suspension upon a second drunk driving conviction, and direct vehicle seizure in appropriate cases, and providing a \$1-billion capital injection to help kick-start the Ontario opportunity bonds program to help fund municipal infrastructure investments.

Ontarians have told us they are hopeful about our province's future. Only strong and experienced leadership will protect and expand the gains that we have made so that we can all enjoy the promise of Ontario. We have come this far; we can't afford to go back to the doom and gloom days of 10 or 15 years ago. I want to assure Ontarians that they have the leadership they need. We intend to keep fighting taxes, cutting taxes, and at the same time growing the economy.

I am quite pleased also to wish all the South Asians and the South Asians' friends in Ontario—because today is the start of South Asian Heritage Month. I would encourage all the members in the Legislature today to come and join me in the Ontario legislative dining room for a reception at 6 o'clock. I would encourage the staff perhaps to come and join us and celebrate the start of this month-long celebration. I know there are going to be several different venues this whole month. Wherever you live, please join the South Asian community in commemorating this month. There is going to be a golf tournament to raise funds for the Yee Hong Centre on May 30. As well, on May 31, Gerrard Street is going to be closed so that people can come, walk around, taste South Asian delicacies, as well as listen to the music. This is just like the Taste of the Danforth.

I'm quite pleased that the South Asian community is coming forward and having the community at large come in, celebrating their heritage and the contributions of the South Asian community. Ever since my uncle, Jimmy Gill, came to Ontario as the first South Asian, the South Asians have contributed a lot to the Ontario economy and to Ontario culture. I am pleased to be thanking them and also celebrating South Asian Heritage Month with them. So I do encourage members to perhaps come and join me.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to join with you in this debate today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I move adjournment of the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Mrs Dombrowsky has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

**Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio):** I would move adjournment of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The chief government whip has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

It is carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday, May 5.

*The House adjourned at 1701.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Springdale		Hastings-Frontenac-	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Lennox and Addington	
Brampton West-Mississauga /	<b>Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony</b> (PC)	Huron-Bruce	<b>Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen</b> (PC)
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée		Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		Gerretsen, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)		Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	<b>Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC)
	Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	Lanark-Carleton	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Dufferin-Peel-	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Wellington-Grey	O'Toole, John R. (PC)		<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC)
Durham	Colle, Mike (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Eglinton-Lawrence	Peters, Steve (L)		Wood, Bob (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	<b>Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim</b> (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	London-Fanshawe	<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.</b> (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Markham	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC)		Sampson, Rob (PC)
	Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	<b>Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda</b> (PC)		
	Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga East / -Est	<b>DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl</b> (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	<b>Baird, Hon / L'hon John R.</b> (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	<b>Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	<b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	<b>Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	<b>Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	<b>Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary</b> (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	<b>Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad</b> (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	<b>Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J.</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	<b>Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian</b> (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	<b>Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R.</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	<b>Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	<b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet</b> (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	<b>Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	<b>Young, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York North / -Nord	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Vacant
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 5 May 2003

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 5 mai 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** I rise today to mark the 88th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. April 24, 1915 was the start of a planned and systematic campaign to eradicate the Armenian people. One and one-half million Armenian men, women and children were brutally killed. At the time, the world community sat idle and did nothing. Thus, the stage was set for other genocides and human tragedies. In fact, upon unveiling his final solution for the Jewish people, Adolf Hitler noted to his aides that the world would not lift a finger because, in his words, "who today remembers the Armenians?"

What is doubly tragic about the Armenian genocide is that even today, 88 years later, much of the world refuses to acknowledge the horrific events. The perpetrators continue to deny the truth.

This open wound cannot heal. Peace can only be achieved when there is justice; justice cannot exist without the truth, and the truth is not divisible by two.

On April 27, I and our colleagues Gerry Phillips and George Smitherman were honoured to stand in remembrance with members of the community to commemorate the genocide. This is the fifth year I've been proud to participate in the youth candlelight vigil here on the ground of Queen's Park.

Recent events around the world will give all members of this assembly a chance to pause and remember the human tragedy of genocide and to give the survivors of this horror the recognition they seek and deserve.

#### GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It is my pleasure to rise in the House to express my full support for the initiatives announced in the throne speech last week. This throne speech is especially memorable because it's the result of consultations with over 10,000 Ontario citizens.

People have spoken, and I know many of my residents of Durham riding have spoken as well.

We've introduced many new initiatives, such as, for example, legislation enabling seniors to retire at a time of

their choosing, increasing payments under the Ontarians with disabilities support plan and, of course, tougher sentences for drunk drivers. These are just three of the important initiatives.

We've confirmed our commitment to proposals in the 2003 budget that include an additional 17 tax reductions for seniors, business and wage-earners in the province of Ontario.

It includes our commitment to implementing the report from Dr Rozanski on education. I would like to thank my constituents Jean Blair, Madge Cadan, Don Kerr and Bev Oda for joining me at the throne speech.

Don Kerr is a D-Day veteran, Madge Cadan is a veteran of the RCAF and Jean Blair is a veteran from the WRCNS. Don Kerr said he was pleased to learn of Ontario's support for the Juno Beach memorial for the World War II veterans. He also was very supportive of the recognition for health care workers who served courageously in the SARS emergency.

Free tuition for nurses and doctors and a number of other commitments all impressed my constituents. I'm happy that our Premier, Ernie Eves, is on the right track to bring Ontario back to prosperity.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Every time a taxpayer in Ontario views a television commercial from the Conservative government of Ernie Eves, or hears a radio ad, or reads a full-page ad in a newspaper, or opens a mailbox to find yet another pamphlet, that taxpayer must reach into his or her pocket to pay for what amounts to a blatantly partisan, self-congratulatory political message—and that cost is now over \$400 million.

The latest set of highway billboards, complete with the Premier's name, has added substantially to the cost to be borne by taxpayers.

The bombardment of the airwaves and the filling of the print media with Conservative propaganda at public cost is an abuse of public office, an abuse of Ontario taxpayers, a violation of the government's own weak advertising guidelines and a contempt of the Ontario Legislature.

The Eves Conservatives should repay the taxpayers of Ontario for their partisan ads from the huge partisan war chest filled with donations from the wealthiest and most powerful in the province.

It is time to pass the bill introduced by Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty ending partisan government adver-

tising by subjecting all such advertising to an independent review agency. Only then will the taxpayers of Ontario be protected from the abuses of the Eves Conservatives in this province.

### CARDIAC CARE

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** There was a time in my riding when health care was sub-standard. There was a time when residents of my community had to travel in ill health to receive the treatment that they required. There was a time when a first-class city had Third World health care.

It gives me great pride to stand here today and inform the House that these days have passed. Thanks to the hard work of our government and the people of Kitchener, St Mary's hospital now has a cardiac care unit that can treat people where they reside. Gone are the days of long journeys for treatment when the Liberals and the NDP were in power. Numerous surgeons and specialists have been hired to assist in the development of this unit, and it pleases me to say that numerous services are now available to the residents of Kitchener.

When the cardiac centre is completed, residents of the Kitchener-Waterloo region and surrounding areas will no longer need to travel long distances or wait for extended periods of time for service. In fact, St Mary's General Hospital now has one of the shortest waiting lists for angiography in the province. Other services provided by this excellent hospital include non-invasive testing and pacemaker insertions. In addition, the hospital has a six-bed coronary care unit and 28-bed in-patient cardiology unit.

Health care in Kitchener Centre has come a long way. It has evolved from the once archaic, out-of-date system to a more modern, accessible, universal health care system that is unparalleled. We have some of the best doctors, nurses and health care workers in the province. I am glad that the government is committed to keeping this standard of service for the people of Kitchener.

The introduction of the cardiac care unit in my riding will bring to the residents of Kitchener what they have long deserved: a first-rate, world-class health care system that will benefit my community for years to come.

### MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** This is Mental Health Awareness Week. It marks the 53rd anniversary of Mental Health Week in Canada. I salute all the mental health workers throughout Ontario and Canada.

Mental health affects most families. Approximately one in five Canadians will experience a mental health illness during their lifetime. In the speech from the throne last Thursday, April 30, the Lieutenant Governor said, "To help remove the stigma of mental illness and ease the suffering of those afflicted, your government is addressing the mental health needs of children and adults." However, the very next day, May 1, the Ottawa

Hospital announced that it would balance its budget by again cutting psychological services. After laying off the same number of psychologists last year, the hospital will be left with just one-third the number of psychologists as are at similar facilities in London and Hamilton.

John Service, head of the Canadian Psychological Association, says, "By cutting the services in the public sector, people of lower income just don't have access to psychological counselling."

The fact that psychologists represent a savings to the health care system should result in greater access to appropriate psychological services, not reduced access, as is the case in the Ottawa area and the Ottawa Hospital today—a sad state of affairs for Mental Health Week.

To all of those who struggle through this difficulty—congratulations to the health care workers. My heart is with you.

### SARS

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Once again I would like to send my condolences to the families of all those who lost their lives through this terrible disease, SARS, and to again thank all of the health care workers of the health care profession—not only in this great city of Toronto, but in the greater Toronto area and in fact from clear across the province who came through in our time of need here in Toronto. We all agree in this Legislature that they did a tremendous job. Once again, I don't think we can thank them enough for the incredible job they did, at their own personal peril in many instances.

I do want to point out to the government that although we appreciate Bill 1 and the package they brought forward to help promote Toronto—and it is very much appreciated and it seems to be working, and we hope that it continues to work. But I want to point out to the government that the NDP has been working with the hotel-motel association as well as small businesses across this city from St Clair to Danforth to Gerrard: bars, restaurants, butcher shops. Everyone is suffering, and although some are recovering, some are not. The hotel-motel association, as well as the NDP, has called for specific measures, a training EI program to help them through, and there are things the small business community needs for help in their recovery.

So I'm calling on the government once again to please review those suggestions and come through for those sectors that are badly affected by SARS and need the government's help.

1340

### WAR IN IRAQ

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** A number of my constituents have been serving in Iraq, either fighting on the ground in Iraq or serving on board ship in the Gulf. I wish to recognize and honour four men from Six Nations in my riding who have done what our



federal counterparts would not. They came to the aid of our neighbours and friends in their time of need.

In recent months, these four men from Six Nations joined in the effort to rid Iraq of the tyranny it endured under Saddam Hussein's regime. When the call for action came, these four men—Aaron White, Sergeant Neil Anthony and Clint Doxtator of the US Marines, as well as Karl Green of the Army Corps of Engineers—served. I point out that they had to go south of the border to do this. While Ottawa continued to play it safe at home, the proud families and friends of these four men were left to hope for their safe return from Iraq after a shared victory with our American and British friends and neighbours—victory over tyranny and oppression and victory fought for and with the brave sacrifice and hard work of these four people from Six Nations.

ALAN KUZMICH  
AND PAUL NEUDERT

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** The member for Brant.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see you.

I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the lives of two fallen police officers whose names were added to the wall of honour during the Ontario police memorial held on Sunday, May 4, 2003.

Police Constable Alan Kuzmich of the South Simcoe Police Service and Six Nations Police Constable Paul Neudert of the Walpole Island Police Service both lost their lives last year in the line of duty. On behalf of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal caucus and, I'm sure, all of us, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the families and colleagues of both of these police officers. Our prayers and thoughts go out to you and will continue to do so. Constable Kuzmich and Constable Neudert demonstrated an ultimate form of courage and bravery, the same qualities shown every day by our frontline police officers.

I want to take a moment to commend every police officer who day to day, day in and day out, protects the residents of Ontario and provides a myriad of services that keep all of our communities safe. As the public safety and security critic, I have talked to many police officers and their families across the province to understand the dangers that police officers face on a daily basis. This loss is not only to the province, but also to those communities which they served.

The memorial itself is good. The memorial was created to honour those police officers in the province who lost their lives in the line of duty. This year, those names are added to the following: "Heroes in life, not in death."

#### SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** For the second year in a row, based on my private

member's bill, people of South Asian origin and their friends throughout Ontario are celebrating May as South Asian Heritage Month and May 5 as South Asian Arrival Day.

While most South Asians came to Canada from India, many others came from such places as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius, Singapore, Malaysia, Fiji, the United Kingdom, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and many other countries.

Today, South Asians make up approximately 7% of Ontario's population and are proud to draw upon their heritage and traditions while contributing to many aspects of culture, commerce and public service across our province.

South Asian Heritage Month is an opportunity to showcase the accomplishments and successes of the South Asian community. On May 1, 2003, I had the pleasure of joining many of my fellow colleagues, the consul general of Pakistan, Mr Ghalib Iqbal, the consul general of India, Mr Divyabh Manchanda, as well as the consul general of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs Vernetta Calvin-Smith, and over 60 members of Ontario's South Asian community at the inaugural South Asian Heritage Month reception at Queen's Park. As a member of the first South Asian family in Ontario and a member of this Legislature, it gives me great pleasure to join with all members of this House in recognizing the month of May as South Asian Heritage Month and today, May 5, as South Asian Arrival Day.

It is my hope that as we continue to use this opportunity to enhance our understanding and appreciation of our rich culture, heritage and tradition, we continue to make Ontario and Canada the best place in the world to live, work and raise our families.

#### LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Just before I begin, I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming the legislative pages.

We have Patricia Beaulieu from Halton; Rebecca Bowie from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh; Tyler Brown from Mississauga West; Felix Ka-Ho Chu from Scarborough-Agincourt; Aaron Clarke from Waterloo-Wellington; Alyssa Clarke from Erie-Lincoln; Brian Donohue from Thunder Bay-Superior North; Matthew Fabbicino from Burlington; Jaclyn Foster from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford; Charles Katrycz from Parkdale-High Park; Natalie King from Simcoe North; Brennan Lane from Hamilton West; Thomas McBey from Willowdale; Benjamin Reitzel from Nickel Belt; Jenny Ryzhikov from York Centre; Vladimir Sikman from Windsor-St Clair; Rebecca Tallman from Algoma-Manitoulin; Kathleen Toth from Etobicoke-Lakeshore; Taylor Whittamore from Markham; and Angela Zhang from Scarborough East.

Please join me in welcoming our new group of pages.

## VISITORS

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know members of this assembly will want to join in welcoming to this chamber ambulance dispatchers from across Ontario, members of OPSEU.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

## NOROUZ DAY ACT, 2003

## LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR DE NOROUZ

Mr Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to proclaim the first day of spring as Norouz Day / Projet de loi 15, Loi proclamant le premier jour du printemps Jour de Norouz.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** Ontario's citizens of Persian descent have made significant contributions to the development of the province. The traditions have enhanced the rich cultural fabric of Ontario.

"Norouz" in Persian means New Year Day, and it is the beginning of the year for the people of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Tajikistan. It is also celebrated in the new year by the people of Iranian stock, particularly the Kurds, in the neighbouring regions of Georgia, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. It begins precisely with the beginning of spring on the vernal equinox. Norouz has been celebrated, in fact, since the ice age, with many ancient rituals and traditions.

Today, the ceremony has been simplified. The ritual table is laid and family members, all dressed in their best, sit around the table and eagerly await the announcement of the exact time of the vernal equinox over radio or television. Elders give gifts to younger members. Next, the round of visits to neighbours, relatives and friends begins. Each visit is reciprocated.

In Ontario, the traditions of Norouz and the celebration of the Persian culture are observed by the Iranian Canadian community as well as by others of central Asian origin. I am pleased to propose that we formally acknowledge this day and encourage all members of the House to ensure its swift passage.

1350

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE STATUTE LAW  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS  
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA DIVULGATION  
DE RENSEIGNEMENTS  
SUR LES ADOPTIONS

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of adoption

disclosure / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne la divulgation de renseignements sur les adoptions.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I believe the members of this Legislature are aware that this is not actually the first time this bill is being read, and that the majority of members here support it.

I will remind people, once again, what this bill is about. It gives adoptive persons unqualified rights of access to their own original birth registrations and gives corresponding rights to birth parents. It allows birth parents and adoptive persons time to file no-contact notices if they wish to do so, and it makes counselling, which is now mandatory through the ministry, optional.

The time has come to pass the bill. I'm pleased to have read it again for the first time today, and look forward to the debate that's soon to come.

ORGAN OR TISSUE DONATION  
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003  
MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT  
AU DON D'ORGANES OU DE TISSU

Mr Gilchrist moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to organ or tissue donation on death / Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait au don d'organes ou de tissu au moment du décès.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** What this bill hopes to do is raise awareness to an even higher level of the importance of organ donation. There are literally thousands of people in this province right now whose lives have been compromised by a failed organ, and who are currently on a waiting list. Many people in this province have done the responsible thing and signed an organ donation card; unfortunately, not nearly enough.

More to the point: despite your best wishes, as the law currently stands, after you pass, your family or loved ones actually get to pass the final judgment. Notwithstanding your wishes as to what should happen with your organs, someone else gets to make that decision.

This bill would do two things: first off, it would require that everyone filling out an application or renewal for a driver's licence or health card would be required to answer the question. You can still say no, but you would be required to answer the question and it would be law. Secondly, your decision would be deemed the final and binding consent for the donation of organs.

In this way, as tragic as the circumstances may be surrounding the deaths of individuals in this province, at



least you would have the comfort of knowing that somewhere else in this province, someone is benefiting from the most generous gift you could give: the gift of life.

REPRESENTATION AMENDMENT ACT  
(NORTHERN ONTARIO), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE  
(NORD DE L'ONTARIO)

Mr Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 1996 to prohibit the reduction of electoral districts in Northern Ontario / Projet de loi 18, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale pour interdire la réduction du nombre de circonscriptions électorales du Nord de l'Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** This bill is actually a reintroduction of a bill that died on the order paper. This bill amends the Representation Act, 1996, to prohibit the reduction of the number of electoral districts in northern Ontario below the number of districts that existed on June 3, 1999. In effect, this maintains the voice of northern Ontario in this Legislature.

ANAPHYLACTIC STUDENTS  
PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003  
SUR LA PROTECTION  
DES ÉLÈVES ANAPHYLACTIQUES

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to protect anaphylactic students / Projet de loi 19, Loi visant à protéger les élèves anaphylactiques.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** This is the reintroduction of a bill that died on the order paper. The bill requires that every school principal establish a school anaphylactic plan. The plan would, among other things, develop and maintain strategies to reduce the risks of exposure that could result in anaphylactic shock at the school; communication forms and information about life-threatening allergies; arrange for training; development of emergency procedure plans for each anaphylactic student; and maintain current information on file.

With consent, school staff could administer and supervise the administration of the medication that is required to be taken during the school day. In the event of an emergency involving an anaphylactic student, school staff would be permitted to administer medication with-

out consent. No action for damages resulting from administration of the medication would be permitted unless the damages were a result of gross negligence.

I have over 7,000 names on petitions in support of this bill, and I recommend highly that this bill be passed.

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Mr Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to enhance safety and mobility on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité et la mobilité sur les routes de l'Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister for a short statement?

*Applause.*

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation):** I will accept the applause and defer my statement to ministers' statements.

FISH AND WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION AMENDMENT ACT  
(DOUBLE-CRESTED  
CORMORANTS), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON  
ET DE LA FAUNE  
(CORMORAN À AIGRETTES)

Mr Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 in respect of double-crested cormorants / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune à l'égard du cormoran à aigrettes.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** This bill is a reintroduction of a bill that died on the order paper. The bill amends the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, to permit the hunting of double-crested cormorants, subject to specific restrictions.

Section 1 of the bill permits the hunting of double-crested cormorants from September 5 to the end of December in any year. It goes on to impose daily and seasonal limitations on the number of double-crested cormorants that may be hunted.

Section 2 of the bill makes it legal for a person to destroy, take or possess the nest of eggs of a double-crested cormorant.

1400

CARLIE MYKE AND BRANDON WHITE  
ACT (SAFE SCHOOL ZONES HIGHWAY  
TRAFFIC AMENDMENT), 2003

LOI CARLIE MYKE  
ET BRANDON WHITE DE 2003  
(MODIFICATION DU CODE DE LA ROUTE  
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ  
DES ZONES D'ÉCOLE)

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to honour Carlie Myke and Brandon White by amending the Highway Traffic Act to reduce the rate of speed permitted on highways surrounding schools and to ensure traffic safety in school zones /  
Projet de loi 22, Loi en hommage à Carlie Myke et Brandon White modifiant le Code de la route afin de réduire la vitesse autorisée sur les voies publiques autour des écoles et d'assurer la sécurité routière dans les zones d'école.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** This is a bill that died on the order paper as well. I'm reintroducing it.

The bill reduces the speed at which motor vehicles may travel on the highways surrounding schools. To those who don't understand, "highways," in the Highway Traffic Act, mean roads around schools. The rate of speed is reduced to 30 kilometres an hour in the case of two-lane highways and is reduced by 10 kilometres in the case of highways with more than two lanes.

The bill requires municipalities and trustees of police villages to establish school safety teams to review traffic problems surrounding schools in the municipality or village and report those to the municipality, the school board and the Ministry of Transportation.

One other piece of information I've gleaned from my research in North America is that when you do province-wide or state-wide rules like this, not only do drivers learn them, they also reduce the risk of anyone getting injured by 70%.

## VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Just before we continue, we have in the members' west gallery Mr Bob Frankford, the former member from Scarborough East and a member of the 35th Parliament. Please join me in welcoming our colleague.

## MOTIONS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 3, 4, 5 and 6 be waived.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTION

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I move that the following amendment be made to the membership of a certain committee. I didn't know we had "a certain committee."

**Interjection:** Name names.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** OK, I will, damn it.

Mr Dunlop replaces Mr Gilchrist on the standing committee on public accounts.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, May 5, 2003, and Tuesday, May 6, 2003, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1404 to 1410.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bartolucci, Rick	Gilchrist, Steve	Parsons, Ernie
Beaubien, Marcel	Gill, Raminder	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hastings, John	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Hudak, Tim	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Jackson, Cameron	Sergio, Mario
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Smitherman, George
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Kennedy, Gerard	Sterling, Norman W.
Colle, Mike	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Stockwell, Chris
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Levac, David	Tsubouchi, David H.
Curling, Alvin	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	Young, David
Elliott, Brenda	Mushinski, Marilyn	



**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Bisson, Gilles  
Hampton, Howard

Kormos, Peter  
Marchese, Rosario

Martel, Shelley  
Prue, Michael

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 74; the nays are 6.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

#### VISITORS

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, we have a page here from the fine constituency of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Rebecca Bowie. On behalf of Mr Cleary, I'd like to introduce her parents, Kevin and Susan Bowie, and her sister Dara, also here today.

### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### ROAD SAFETY

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation):** Ontario now has the safest roads in North America.  
*Applause.*

**Hon Mr Klees:** Only having been on the job for a month, that's not a bad accomplishment.

This is a significant improvement since 1995, when Ontario ranked second in Canada and sixth in North America. Most importantly, the number of fatalities on Ontario's roads have dropped to its lowest level since 1950. We're proud of this accomplishment and we'll continue to work with our many road safety partners to improve safety across the province.

Our latest statistics show that since 1988 there has been a steady decline of 53.5% in drinking and driving in Ontario. This decline of fatalities in the province is significant. The government is committed to ensuring that this trend continues. We can't afford to sit back and get complacent.

Motor vehicle collisions continue to injure thousands and kill hundreds of Ontarians each year. Ontario still records about 16,000 convictions a year for drinking and driving—far too many. That's why we announced more ignition interlock facilities this week and will continue to advance that program.

Today, with this bill, the Ernie Eves government is taking further action to make Ontario's roads the safest in the world. To achieve this goal, we will continue working closely with a broad range of road safety partners and stakeholders across the province. These include police services, safety organizations, community groups, industry and individuals.

In the last legislative session, members will recall that the government introduced Bill 241, An Act to enhance safety and mobility on Ontario's roads. However, the proposed legislation expired with the end of the session. So I am pleased today to reintroduce the Road Safety Act, 2003, for first reading. The bill contains measures to enhance the safety of Ontario's roads and to protect the lives of all those who use them. It also contains some refinements that have been incorporated since the fall, in response to input we've received from interested parties and many of the members in the House. We've listened to concerns and we've acted on them.

The proposed measures are grouped under four general themes. These themes are: promoting responsible driving behaviour; complementing and building on the work being done by our road safety partners to enhance road safety; strengthening our ability to enforce the safety of commercial vehicles; and making construction zones safer for workers, as well as motorists.

The proposed bill contains a total of 14 legislative items. Some measures build on the tough approach to road safety our government has taken since 1995; others are being proposed in response to what we heard from road safety organizations and other stakeholders.

I would like to highlight some of the proposed measures for the honourable members here today, beginning with the theme of promoting more responsible driver behaviour.

The first proposal is a province-wide crackdown on street racing. Under the proposed bill, those determined to race their vehicles on public roads would face immediate seizure of their vehicle, a 48-hour licence suspension or both. These actions are designed to safeguard members of the public from this dangerous activity.

In addition, the proposed bill would ban nitrous oxide systems that are fully connected and functional in any vehicle driven on public roads. As members may know, nitrous oxide is a compressed liquid gas that can be injected into an engine's combustion process to cause rapid acceleration. The proposed legislation would still allow nitrous oxide systems to be installed in motor vehicles for legitimate use at racetracks, for example. But if you drive on public roads, the nitrous oxide tank must be visibly disconnected. A police officer inspecting a motor vehicle may take a sample of any substance that is connected to the fuel system or engine. The police would also be able to order the removal and disposal of the nitrous oxide tank.

With this measure, we are sending a clear message, and that message is that street racing is illegal, dangerous and unacceptable in Ontario.

If passed, this bill will also allow the Ministry of Transportation to regulate how much after-market window tinting can be applied to the windshield and the windows of a vehicle. This would allow police officers to see into vehicles as they approach. This measure of course would also enhance road safety. It would allow drivers and pedestrians to establish eye contact more

easily and allow drivers to see better at night, as well as during bad weather.

There are a number of other important proposals in this bill designed to promote more responsible behaviour by drivers.

One of these proposals would make the use of booster seats mandatory for children who have outgrown standard child car seats but who are still too small for adult seat belts to be effective. Under this government's Road Safety Act, 2003, parents and legal guardians would be responsible for ensuring that booster seats are used for children who weigh between 18 and 27 kilograms, or 40 and 60 pounds, whose seated height is less than 63 centimetres, or 25 inches.

Health Canada statistics show that motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death for children from one to nine years of age. That is why this government wants to ensure that Ontario's children are protected.

This bill also proposes to give the province the authority to work co-operatively with other jurisdictions toward the future enforcement and collection of fines.

Those motorists who have outstanding driving-related fines will be caught under this particular piece of legislation. Under the proposal, the province would be able to enter into reciprocal agreements to suspend the licences of any Ontario driver who has outstanding fines in other jurisdictions. In the same way, participating jurisdictions could suspend the licence of any of their drivers with fines outstanding in Ontario. All drivers have a responsibility to drive safely at home as well as in other jurisdictions, and so we need to hold drivers accountable and get unsafe drivers off the road.

1420

The Road Safety Act, 2003, which I am introducing today, also contains a provision that would require Ontario drivers to use the left-hand lane only for passing on highways with three or more lanes and a speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour. This measure will help to curb aggressive driving behaviour such as tailgating or executing rapid or unsafe lane changes. This rule would apply to specified sections where conditions make sense, not in congested traffic conditions or approaches to exits from the highway.

The second theme of our road safety bill is to build on and strengthen the work of our road safety partners. Under this group of measures, we propose to introduce quick-clearance legislation that clarifies police powers to remove vehicles and debris from the highway expeditiously while at the same time protecting police against liability. It will allow municipalities throughout the province to set a speed limit of 30 kilometres per hour in designated areas where traffic-calming measures are in effect, and it will clarify for medical practitioners the requirements for reporting the medical conditions of drivers to the Ministry of Transportation.

With respect to medical reporting, the proposed amendment would change the current mandatory reporting requirements for physicians to a combination of mandatory and discretionary reporting as proposed by the

Ontario Medical Association. We listened to their concerns and we have acted.

Our bill would also broaden the range of health care professionals who can report medical conditions and impairments to the Ministry of Transportation. These professionals will be identified after the consultation with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The third theme of our proposed road safety legislation is to strengthen the province's ability to monitor and enforce commercial vehicle safety. The measures we're proposing in our road safety bill include: marking the boxes of all dump trucks and trailers that haul gravel and other aggregates to improve load distribution; monitoring the safety performance of large vehicles, including road-building equipment and mobile cranes; cracking down on illegal commercial passenger vans; revoking the licences of motor vehicle inspection stations that are operated by commercial carriers that have a poor safety record; and introducing regular, province-wide mechanical safety inspections for taxis.

The final theme of our proposed road safety legislation is to make highway construction zones safer in Ontario both for people who work on the roads as well as for motorists. If these proposals are enacted, they would allow municipalities to delegate the authority to set speed limits within construction zones to municipal technical staff, double the amount of the fine payable for drivers convicted of speeding in a construction zone and require drivers to obey the hand-held signs used by traffic control workers in construction zones and maintenance areas, just as drivers are now legally required to obey the signs used by school crossing guards.

The proposed measures in our road safety bill underline the Eves's government's commitment to a modern, efficient and safe transportation system, a system that supports economic growth, creates jobs, builds a healthy environment and maintains our excellent quality of life here in Ontario.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues):** We've just received these daisies from the women's shelters, and I would like unanimous consent for all the members to wear them in recognition of Wife Assault Prevention Month.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Our government is committed to preventing violence against women. We continue to take a comprehensive approach to protect women and keep our communities safe. We have programs across nine ministries; we have doubled the resources to stop the violence since we've been in government, and we will continue to support the work of our community agencies and of everyone who is there to prevent the violence.



Sexual Assault Prevention Month has been recognized in Ontario since 1988. It is a way to underline sexual assault, create public awareness and highlight our government's commitment to preventing violence against women.

Statistics show that women between the ages of 12 and 24 are at a greater risk of sexual assault than any other age group—12 and 24. Only 6% of sexual assaults are reported to police, and in 70% of reported cases, the victim knew the assailant. These findings are deeply troubling. They suggest that before adulthood, many women may experience sexual assault and many will likely suffer in silence. This is simply unacceptable.

Our government has taken many steps toward raising awareness about this crime. Our message is clear: we will not tolerate violence against women.

Our most recent efforts to prevent sexual assault are directed at our youth. We continue to focus on young people. We are taking action to promote healthy relationships among young people. This is ongoing.

As part of our comprehensive approach, the Ontario Women's Directorate introduced a new sexual assault information Web site last May. This initiative provides an interactive, teen-friendly resource for youth to get vital information about sexual assault. This month the portal will expand to include more resources.

Our government believes that the best approach to preventing sexual assault is to influence social attitudes, particularly among young people, to keep them and their parents informed. The youth of today deal with many issues surrounding sexual violence. Their issues are real. By giving them resources, support and solutions, we give them a voice. By focusing on young people early, we will raise awareness and protect future generations.

### ROAD SAFETY

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I'm addressing the Minister of Transportation. This bill is similar to one that was introduced December 12 of last year. We have not sat in this House for 138 days. This bill was put forward on the last day of the sitting last year, and we've been away from this House for 138 days.

No one condones street racing, certainly not in this party, led by Dalton McGuinty, but the minister's bill of December 12 was flawed, very much so. It jeopardized those persons who were car enthusiasts. Hobbyists were put in a position whereby they may not have been able to drive their vehicles.

The Big Three automakers were concerned about that particular part of the bill as well because they sell after-market products for automobiles.

So the bill certainly was flawed in December; there's no doubt about it. It was so badly flawed that the Premier, in his wisdom, made the then Minister of Transportation the Attorney General.

I'm glad to see that the member opposite has taken upon himself to take construction-zone safety seriously and has taken part of my bill introduced on December 12,

2001. But he did not take all of the bill that I introduced, and he did not put in place all of the recommendations of the Van Rooyen inquest. Dick Van Rooyen was killed as a construction worker in Carnage Alley in my riding, near Ridgetown.

Why didn't the minister take all of the coroner's inquest results and recommendations? He only took part of them. Part of the recommendations was to double the demerit points and have a written construction plan. My bill would have done that. But I am pleased that the minister took part of my bill of 2001 and has introduced it here today.

1430

The minister said he wanted to protect children. I wish he'd take another bill of mine, my school bus bill, and protect the 800,000 children who ride school buses in Ontario. Some 16,000 school buses travel our roads each and every day and, sadly, people continue to pass the school buses, with disregard for the red lights flashing.

This government will use vehicle liability, which is contained in my school bus bill, for parking fines, for red light cameras, for flying tires on trucks and for collecting electronic tolls here in Ontario—they will use vehicle liability, but they will not use it to protect the children on our school buses.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):** Minister for women's issues, if you are really serious about addressing the very serious issue of sexual assault, you won't only set up a Web portal; you will reinstate the 5% cut in funding for the sexual assault centres you so callously implemented in 1995. You will reinstate the funding that you also cut in 1995 to second-stage housing so that children of sexually abusive partners will learn that no means no. And you will implement the Hadley recommendations.

Minister, you know that 38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their partners. You know that 93% of sexual assault survivors do not report to the police. But did you know that 60% of Canadian college-aged males have indicated they would commit sexual assault if they were certain they would not get caught? That should trouble all of us who have children in the university and college system. Some 50% of female and 31% of male children have experienced at least one unwanted sexual act. Of sexual assaults reported to police, 80% were female and 20% were male.

What is this government's record? Funding to rape crisis/sexual assault centres was cut by 5% in 1995, and there have been no funding increases in the eight years since. To date, the requests for funding have been denied.

With respect to your law-and-order reputation, your record on domestic violence is one of abandonment and neglect. A study by the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto shows just how little you care about really standing up for victims of crime. Of those convicted of domestic abuse, 37% got conditional charges, 25% had

their sentences suspended and another 7% got off with some house arrest. Under your watch, only 20% of abusers serve any time in jail; the rest just walk away.

I'm proud to say that under a Dalton McGuinty government, we will assist victims of date rape drugs and crack down on their use. We will increase funding to sexual assault centres and we will reinstate funding to second-stage housing.

I challenge you, Minister, and your Premier to steal those ideas from us as well. If you don't, tell your Premier to find the courage to call an election and let's get some real change in this province.

### ROAD SAFETY

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Liberals worried about people stealing ideas? I've seen everything. My Lord.

Mr Speaker, you couldn't tell there was an election in the air, could you? The Minister of Transportation comes walking into the House with what essentially is a housekeeping bill, at a time when the government is supposed to be here challenging Ontarians and challenging this Legislature with new ideas about what direction this government should be taking and what we should be doing as legislators to deal with the many issues that confront us in Ontario.

We listened. There was a throne speech last week and we expected that the government was going to come forward with something really concrete, something really solid that helps us deal with the many complex issues we have facing us today. We have people in the galleries who have issues they want dealt with. What does this government do? It comes in with a Minister of Transportation who brings in basically what is a housekeeping bill, at a time when we should be dealing with real issues. Boy, do I know there's an election around the corner when you see a government come in with what's going on over here.

They have talked about how they've been good for drivers and they've been good for highways. Does this government not remember the list of things that it has done in government since 1995? You're the guys who went out and privatized highway maintenance in this province. You can't find a snowplow when you need it because you're in the ditch somewhere and there's all kinds of snow but there's no snowplow. It's been a dismal failure. It's been nothing but a problem. We've got more people who get stranded on highways across this province since you guys privatized winter road maintenance. On top of that, you guys went out and privatized Highway 407 and people are now having to pay skyrocketing rates when it comes to tolls.

I say to the government across the way, you've done something positive when it comes to roads in this province? Let's not forget one of the first things that you did. You went and downloaded the highways that used to be owned and operated by the province of Ontario and you put them on the back of municipalities who don't

have the money to maintain them. Go riding on those used-to-be highways that we now call municipal roads that have absolutely no infrastructure left to them.

So I say to this government, if you want a real plan, come over here to the NDP caucus. Look at what Howard Hampton has. We have the plan to put these things in order. I'll leave the rest of the time to my good colleague; out of time.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I'd also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the provincial Daisy of Hope campaign—that's why we're wearing these daisies today—making the month of May a public awareness education program targeting the issue of domestic violence, as we also today announce that May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

I was hoping that the minister would have more concrete suggestions and recommendations and indeed would be announcing today that her government would be reinstating the 5% cut that was made to rape crisis centres and shelters back in 1995. As the minister knows, shelters have been writing letters to all of us over the last several months saying that they cannot manage, they're going deeper and deeper in the hole and they're unable to provide the services to those women who desperately need their help.

Minister, I want to say to you that women's safety depends on their ability to access the means to protect and support their children and themselves. Without fair and equal access to housing, work and income supports, women are made victims. Without equitable legal, anti-violence and neighbourhood supports and services—those very services that your government has cut—women are left increasingly defenceless against abuse.

Howard Hampton and the NDP have a plan to combat violence against women with a comprehensive freedom from fear strategy that provides women the social, economic and legal tools to protect themselves and their families from abuse. These include funding of community-based services for women and children through neighbourhood supports and through emergency services such as crisis lines, adequate shelter funding, a \$3.6-million second-stage housing allocation, and sexual assault and rape crisis centres.

We would fund legal reforms and services that provide women equal protection and representation, including legal aid to cover family law and the implementation of the Arlene May and Gillian Hadley inquest recommendations.

We would ensure that women have the economic supports to flee their abusers and to protect themselves and their children and recognize and fund the ignored needs for services and advocacy for aboriginal women, women of colour, recent immigrants and women with disabilities. I'd ask the minister to fund anti-violence women's organizations and advocacy centres now and reinstate the money that's been cut.



**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the comment by the member for Timmins-James Bay, who referred to the safety bill as a housekeeping item, I would propose that the assumption is that there is nothing controversial in this bill. I would therefore ask for unanimous consent of the House that we move second and third reading of this bill without debate this afternoon.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Just so everyone is clear, the Minister of Transportation has asked that we move second and third and reading without debate.

Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1440

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### PUBLIC HEALTH

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My lead questions today are to the Minister of Health. We're now hearing from some experts in public health care about their very serious concerns regarding our province's ability to cope with a public health emergency. Medical experts are saying that your government's neglect has decimated our public health system.

When you fired the last five public health scientists in Ontario some 16 months ago, we warned that you were leaving Ontario ill-equipped to respond to public health emergencies. Your spokesperson had this to say in response: "Do we really want five people sitting around, waiting for work to arrive? It would be highly unlikely that we would find a new organism in Ontario." We've now had it confirmed that a virus can travel as fast as an international traveller.

Will you now admit that you were wrong to fire those scientists and put the public health of Ontarians at risk?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Indeed, the honourable member has raised some important issues. Certainly, the review of public health since the SARS outbreak has put forward some interesting comments by detached observers such as Carlos Castillo-Chavez, a mathematical epidemiologist at Cornell University, who is quoted in today's *Toronto Star* and *Washington Post* as saying that our response to the SARS outbreak is "a triumph of public health." Dr Clifford McDonald, a medical epidemiologist at US Centers for Disease Control, said on April 24, "The Canadian public health response to this outbreak has been exemplary." Dr Julie Gerberding, the director of US Centers for Disease Control, said, "Canada has provided tremendous leadership. We learned more than we could contribute."

The verdict is in, certainly in terms of Ontario's and Canada's response to public health. Are there things that we can learn? Certainly there are, and that is what our review will be all about: to learn from the experience and to be sure we're even more ready next time.

**Mr McGuinty:** First of all, I hope the minister mis-spoke himself. It did not really mean that the verdict was in. It did not really mean that the review that he's about to conduct, or has conducted, is some kind of an academic exercise.

Dr William Bowie is the head of the infectious diseases program at UBC. He's one of the experts that Ontario had to turn to because you had fired all our local experts. Here's what he said: "SARS was an accident waiting to happen. Because of the priorities of the government, the cost-cutting measure, the conditions were great for SARS to take hold." Do you know what he found when he arrived in Ontario? He said, "We had to start from scratch. Ontario doesn't seem able to pull together an integrated effort, either for pandemic planning or do deal with bioterrorism. It's gotten progressively worse. Advice has been ignored now for a long, long time."

Will you now admit that it was wrong to ignore the advice of our experts, and that you were wrong to fire our scientists?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I wish to inform this House, as perhaps many members already know, that the funding for public health in Ontario, even in last year's budget, was more than \$804 million. That's an increase of more than \$100 million since the year 2000. The honourable member talks about cost-cutting measures. He is confused again. The number has been increasing because our commitment to public health has been increasing. Do we have more to learn? Of course we do. I would certainly welcome the honourable member's constructive criticism at the appropriate time when the review is conducted. But when it comes to ensuring that we have an infrastructure for public health, our commitment is second to none.

**Mr McGuinty:** After the Walkerton tragedy, Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor made it perfectly clear that it was absolutely essential that you invest more money in public health, so we understand the need for an immediate infusion of money subsequent to Walkerton.

You went on to fire our last five public health scientists. You replaced them with lab technicians. New York state has 150 public health scientists; Ontario has none.

Then there are those experts who just left. Neal denHollander used to head the standards and development section of the public health lab. Here's what he said about why he left: "I saw the public health labs and the public health units being underfunded and undersupported and being dismantled from the inside out. I didn't want to be any part of that."

Will you now admit, Minister, that you have left our public health system seriously underresourced and incapable of reacting in the best way possible to a serious public health challenge like SARS?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Even last year, funding for our Ontario laboratories increased by 33%, to \$62.6 million. But when the honourable member talks about a specific item, public health scientists, and says that there are no public health scientists in Ontario, sir, I would say to you that is an insult to our public health scientists at Mount

Sinai, it is an insult to our excellent, world-class public health scientists at UHN, an insult to the public health scientists at Sunnybrook and Women's, and I could go on. We have excellent public health scientists in the province of Ontario doing world-class work. We on this side of the House are proud of them.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** New question.

**Mr McGuinty:** My question is for the minister. Minister, you're making my point for me. You have gutted the institutional capacity of the ministry to address public health challenges. We have been relying on volunteers to grapple with SARS in the province of Ontario.

Here's Dr Allison McGeer, head of infection control at Toronto's Mount Sinai. She says, "It's been very clear to us that we were going to pay for the public health dismantling that has happened under the provincial and municipal governments."

Dr Susan Richardson, head of microbiology at Sick Kids, says that we are surviving SARS in spite of the provincial government. She says, "The ability to respond to this outbreak came from the efforts of individuals, not the government." She says that "Individual scientists dropping everything else to help out was the only reason we have survived this outbreak against all odds."

We beat this thing because of well-meaning, expert people who volunteered their services. You gutted the institutional capacity of the ministry to address public health challenges. Why won't you admit that?

**Hon Mr Clement:** The honourable member calls people like Dr McGeer and Dr Low "volunteers." We on this side of the House call them dedicated professionals doing their job on behalf of the people of Ontario.

That's the difference between the two sides of the House. It is clear that we do have a commitment to public health on this side of the House, and we have been funding the best scientists, the best laboratories. To say that there's something wrong with them residing at our teaching hospitals and our universities, where they can do their best work, we on this side of the House disagree. We go to the best in the world. We fund them at our universities, we fund them at our teaching hospitals, and they have not let us down.

1450

**Mr McGuinty:** It's not a question of them letting us down; you let them down, Minister. That's what this is all about.

Here's what Dr Low had to say, in some considerable frustration: "We needed a centralized agency within the province to handle this sort of thing. We needed somebody in charge who had the authority to make decisions and the resources to do what had to be done to carry them out. Instead, we were borrowing and begging to carry out a proper investigation."

Here's what Dr Sheela Basrur said: "We would try to beg, borrow or steal staff from other health units. It's like ripping the bandage off one wound to stop the bleeding of another one."

How is it, Minister, that you have left public health in such a weakened state that we had to rely on volunteer

experts and we had to beg and borrow to respond to an emergency?

**Hon Mr Clement:** The fact is that we did have an all-hands-on-deck-effort from not only the international community and the national community but the province and the local municipalities to defeat what could have been an even greater tragedy than what we faced.

But you don't have to take my word for it. Indeed, it was Caroline Di Cocco, your member for Sarnia-Lambton, who said, "I think it was handled as well as it could have been. The experts were all there and they should be applauded for all they have done." We agree with that as well. Let's applaud our experts, let's applaud our public health officials because they did the job for Ontario and for Canada.

**Mr McGuinty:** I can understand, Minister, why you want to go there, but it is not about our experts. It's not about how they rose magnificently to the challenge and performed heroically—that's not what it is about. It's about the fact that you have gutted the institutional capacity of the government of Ontario to support public health and to respond to public health emergencies—that's what this is all about.

This is what Dr Basrur said about your throne speech last week in reference to the fact that there was not a single mention of public health: "I challenge you to find any mention of public health in there. We're in the middle of a wake-up call and people are still sleeping."

She is right, Mr Minister. The only way to guarantee that we draw all the lessons that should be drawn from this painful experience is to have a full, open, independent public inquiry. What I am asking you now is, will you assure us that we are going to have in this province, instead of your in-house review, a full public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act?

**Hon Mr Clement:** There will be, of course, a full and public discussion and debate, and people will be inquiring about this and that and the other thing to do with the SARS outbreak. That is the commitment of Premier Eves; it is the commitment on this side of the House. We know that we have conclusions to make and things to learn, and we will be doing that.

But to say that this province and the people—the dedicated individuals, the doctors, nurses, medical professionals working with public health officials, working with the government, working with the federal and municipal governments—have not done their job, that is your conclusion, sir. That is the conclusion that you are making already, before there has been any review or any inquiry. I say, sir, you are out of line.

#### HYDRO DEREGULATION

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, exactly one year ago you and your Liberal friends unleashed hydro privatization and deregulation on the people of the province. You both said hydro privatization and deregulation would be good for us. You both said, "Nothing can



go wrong." A year later, hydro bills have skyrocketed; warnings of power shortages happen virtually every second week; communities like Wawa have been pushed to the brink.

Minister, on the one-year anniversary of your much-celebrated hydro privatization and deregulation, don't you think it's time to admit it has been a disaster and end it now?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** We believe, on this side of the House, that we couldn't continue to go down the old path, the old monopoly of the old Ontario Hydro, that we had to do things differently, that we had to embrace the new reality. We had to do a better job for the people of the province of Ontario. We couldn't sit back and watch the old system that had accumulated more than \$38 billion of debt in Ontario. We had to embrace competition. We had to embrace allowing alternative energy on to the grid. It has not been an easy road. It took the better part of 100 years to establish the monopoly at the old Ontario Hydro. It will take more than a few months to adapt to a competitive marketplace. We believe in the long run it will be in the best interests of the people of Ontario. It will be in the best interests of enterprise in the province, and we're committed to that direction.

**Mr Hampton:** The minister mentions alternative energy. These dirty diesel generators that you want to start up across Toronto this summer, I guess that's the Conservative idea of alternative energy.

Look, Minister, you said nothing would go wrong. At the sawmill in Wawa they've laid off 150 workers. Why? They can't afford the price of electricity. At mine smelters and refineries across northern Ontario this summer they are taking very long shutdowns and laying off hundreds of workers. Why? They can't afford the price of privatized, deregulated hydro. People across southern Ontario will breathe the dirtiest air ever this summer.

The Pickering nuclear station is billions of dollars over budget, still shut down and still not producing power. The inquiry you told us about six months ago to find out what went wrong still hasn't happened.

Minister, how much evidence do you and the Liberals need before you admit that hydro privatization and deregulation is a disaster and should be terminated now?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The leader of the third party stands in his place and talks about the privatization of electricity in Ontario. That has not happened. He talks about deregulation. We still have strong regulation in Ontario. We've committed to introduce even greater regulation and consumer protection through a reformed and revitalized Ontario Energy Board with an outstanding individual from the province of Ontario who has accepted the position of chair. That will be tremendously good news for the people of Ontario.

While in government, his party sat back and did absolutely nothing. They didn't build any new power plants in Ontario. If you wanted to open up a windmill and put

power on to the grid in Ontario, his government made it illegal. Thank goodness on this side of the House we've got a group of people bringing on new sources of energy and adopting new ideas to realize the potential of Ontario. We look forward to seeing the future success of that initiative.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to tell the people of Toronto, your new source of energy this summer will be a diesel generator in your neighbourhood that is five times dirtier than the dirtiest coal plant, that will increase your risk of cancer by 50%. This is the Conservative and Liberal idea of hydro privatization and deregulation.

Minister, I want to ask you again. You see, you've tried to hide this by means of temporary rate caps. We find now that the temporary rate caps cost us \$1.3 billion and counting, which is added to the debt, which will appear on people's hydro bills after the election, and yet, even with the rate caps, the real hydro rate that appears on people's hydro bills has gone up by 45%. It seems to me this is all pain and no gain. Why don't you and the Liberals admit that and stop this insane move to privatization and deregulation now?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The leader of the third party never lets the facts get in the way of a good rant. I'm certainly pleased to have him back in the Legislature and to hear it first-hand.

He's wrong on his facts with respect to diesel power. The only choking that has gone on with respect to diesel power is that member travelling around the province of Ontario in his diesel-powered bus spreading his rhetoric. He's wrong in so many regards, I could literally spend my entire time correcting the record, and he is wrong.

## HYDRO GENERATION

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** The minister talks about facts. Here is a fact. The Attorney General for the state of New York is taking your government to the international commission on environmental co-operation because your coal-burning plants, which you refuse to shut down, are polluting the air in his state.

Minister, New Democrats have said, "We are prepared to shut these plants down," and we've outlined a plan on how you replace the energy, something you and the Liberals refuse to do. So tell us this, Minister: why do you want to continue to pollute our air and our neighbours' air for another 12 years?

1500

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I know the Minister of the Environment may want a crack at this in the supplementary. We are tremendously concerned about coal producing power. We have five coal-burning plants in Ontario; in fact, New York has eight. We generate 24% of our electricity in Ontario using coal, and that's demonstrably less than when he and his party were in government. When he and his party were in govern-

ment, they closed down not a single coal plant in the province. Do you know what they did? Nothing.

I'm proud to be part of a government where Ernie Eves has committed that by 2015 we'll close down all the coal plants in Ontario, the only jurisdiction in North America prepared to make that commitment. We are prepared to make the commitment to close down Lakeview by 2005; prepared to stand behind a moratorium on new coal plants; prepared to stand up and say we're not prepared to de-control any coal plant unless there's the commitment to change it.

We're also spending more than a quarter of a billion dollars on pollution abatement at both Nanticoke and Lambton, investments that he and his party failed to make. We will clean up the sorry NDP record on the environment.

**Mr Hampton:** The minister talks about commitment. Would this be his commitment to have the Pickering nuclear station producing hydro by the year 2000, three years ago?

He talks about the dirty coal-fired plants. Let me tell you, Minister, we didn't have to run them at 100%, full out, every day of the week, which is what you're basically doing now, and polluting not only in southern Ontario but elsewhere across eastern North America.

You say the Minister of the Environment wants to get up and answer part of the question. I welcome it. This is the Minister of the Environment who used to be the Minister of Energy, who said, "Oh, we've got lots of energy. We've got lots of electricity. The price won't go up."

Minister, this is the Attorney General for the state of New York. But he's not just talking about people there; he's talking about the 1,900 people in Ontario who died prematurely in this province because of the air pollution. He's talking about more and more schoolchildren in this province who have long-term chronic respiratory disease because of dirty air.

So tell us, Minister, since you seem to have all the answers, why do you want to continue to run these dirty coal plants and poison the air of more children and more people who are already suffering? Why don't you bring forward an agenda which actually shuts down these plants as soon as possible, rather than running them at 100% capacity all the time because you haven't had the forethought to bring on other generation when it has been needed?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I did notice with great interest that he failed to acknowledge why his government in five full years didn't close down a single coal plant in the province of Ontario. Neither did they bring forward a strategy to eliminate coal, not like this government and those of us on this side of the House.

The simple reason why the electricity generators didn't go at 100% when his party was in government is because tens and hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario were without work. There were no jobs, there was no hope and there was no opportunity.

The member opposite talks about coal. In Ontario in the year 2000, we were generating about 30% of our

electricity from coal. Last year, it was down to 24%. That's 24% of the needed electricity generated by coal.

Let's look at our major trading partners: our biggest trading partner, Michigan, 65%; Ohio, 87%; Indiana, 94%.

This government has a solid plan to reduce coal and then eliminate it responsibly, both for the hospitals and the people in their homes who need electricity and for the environment, which is important.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

### **Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):**

My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, we've been saying for some time now that you are making promises that you simply can't keep. You cannot on the one hand put \$5 billion into tax cuts and repair badly damaged public services and at the same time balance the budget.

Now we're hearing from some economic experts who are weighing in on this, Madam Minister.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, for example, has said, in reference to your budget, "They should get an Oscar for the best fiction movie of the year, the Fudge-it Budget."

The Globe and Mail Report on Business column talked about "accounting magic" and made reference to being \$2 billion in the hole by next year, not including electricity costs.

Don Drummond—I'm sure you'll be familiar with him, Madam Minister—chief economist with the Toronto-Dominion Bank, says, "In essence, they are presenting a \$2-billion deficit in 2003."

Madam Minister, can you tell us, which is it that you're going to fail to do next year? Are you going to fail to balance the budget, or are you going to fail to go ahead with investments desperately needed in health care and education?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance):** I know the honourable member may find it difficult to believe that governments can balance budgets, considering what his government did when they were in power: they continued to run up debt. This government has not only balanced the budget for five consecutive years, we have paid down \$5 billion in debt, the first government that has been able to do that. Because of the economic plan we have in place, there are over 1 million new jobs in this province. Family incomes are up. This budget carries forward with the economic plan that we promised the people of Ontario in 1995 we would follow. It is a plan that is working, and the figures show it.

**Mr McGuinty:** You're running a deficit, Madam Minister. You might want to check out the April 30 report for the Dominion Bond Rating Service regarding Ontario. I'll quote from it. "The 2003-04 budget took on a pre-election flavour, delivering tax cuts and broad-based spending increases amid considerable economic uncertainty." It goes on. "Other signs of weakened fiscal discipline include reliance on asset sales to boost reven-



ue, \$771 million conditional on a federal surplus, budgeted in your savings of \$800 million, with few details on how these will be achieved." It goes on to conclude accordingly, "Ontario could face a \$1.9-billion deficit in 2003-04."

Madam Minister, you are making promises that you can't keep. You're trying to be everything to everyone.

We're going to be able to keep our promises because we're making the tough decisions. We're saying to Ontarians, "We cannot afford tax cuts at this point in time, not if we're going to invest in making badly needed repairs in health care and education."

What are you going to do next year, Madam Minister? Are you going to run a deficit or are you going to further cut health care and education?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The honourable member says he's going to keep his promises. Would that be the promise to raise the business taxes in this province so he can kill jobs? Because he's promised to do that. Would that be the promise to take back the tax relief that this government is giving seniors? Because he's promised to take back, take away, the tax relief for seniors. Would that be the tax relief for the parents who want to choose independent schools? Because they promised to take back that tax relief.

On this side of the House we recognize the value and the importance of tax relief for economic growth, tax relief to create jobs. If he doesn't think this is a good-news budget, perhaps he should listen to his constituents, because the president of the Greater Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, his chamber of commerce, called this a good-news budget. Perhaps you should listen to your constituents.

#### VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** New question? The member for Waterloo-Wellington.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** We'll wait until it gets quiet.

The member for Waterloo-Wellington has the floor.

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. First of all, I want to compliment him on his important announcement today to put 1,000 new front-line police officers on the streets of the province of Ontario.

*Applause.*

1510

**The Speaker:** I will give you the extra time. It wasn't your fault. The other side was clapping.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. We've had our fun. The member is trying to ask the question. You're now interrupting him.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The member for Waterloo-Wellington has the floor.

**Mr Arnott:** Many professional firefighters who work in cities and serve during their free time as volunteers

have been threatened and forced by their union to quit their volunteer posts. These double-hatters don't have appropriate and needed legal protection in Ontario.

My private member's Bill 30 was intended to protect the rights of these double-hatters to volunteer in their home communities. Although defeated at third reading on December 11, more than two thirds of the Conservative members present voted for it, three opposition members defied their whip to support it, and the rest of the Liberal and NDP members present were opposed.

Since that time, the government has recognized the magnitude of the problem and is acting on the need to have it resolved in another way. In January the minister appointed a retired judge, the Honourable George Adams, to conduct talks with fire services and stakeholders and attempt to resolve the conflict arising out of the union's effort to phase out and eliminate these volunteer firefighters. The minister deserves credit for taking this initial step.

It is my understanding that the report was presented to the minister's office about a month ago. Is the minister aware of the contents of Justice Adams's report and will the minister update this House regarding Justice Adams's recommendations on double-hatter firefighters? Will he table Justice Adams's report with the House?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security):** I thank the member for the question. I want to thank him as well for the compliment on today's announcement. I will just mention that this is now 2,000 police officers. And I should mention, unlike the Liberals, we costed our promise and we kept our promise.

With respect to the question related to two-hatters, I did indeed appoint Justice Adams to conduct a mediation with the stakeholders to see if we could achieve a consensus on this very controversial issue, and members of this Legislature appreciate just how controversial and divisive it can be. I regret to report that Justice Adams was unable to achieve a consensus. We are now studying his report. He was kind enough to make some recommendations and we're looking at how we can further pursue the issue.

**Mr Arnott:** I want to thank the minister very much for his commitment to public safety, but I also want to remind him that time is essential. Every day without appropriate legal protection for firefighters who want to volunteer is a day they can be subject to threats, harassment and pressure to resign as volunteers in their home communities. They deserve to have the freedom to volunteer and be protected.

Most of the stakeholders clearly agreed. That is my understanding, certainly. Bill 30 was supported in principle by the Ontario fire marshal, and the amended Bill 30 was supported by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario.

The seven hours of debate that MPPs gave Bill 30 was unprecedented for a private member's bill, going back,

I'm told, to 1950. Clearly there is exceptional interest on this issue from this House.

I ask the minister, what assurance will he provide that professional firefighters who volunteer will be free from union harassment? Will he act upon Justice Adams's recommendations and, if government legislation like Bill 30 is in fact required, when will he introduce it?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Justice Adams's goal was to make every effort to achieve a consensus. He was unable to do that, and he indicated to me at the outset that if he was unable to achieve a consensus, he felt no obligation to make recommendations to the government. But he has indeed provided advice. He has suggested ways in which we can approach this issue.

I share the member's concerns with many of the volunteer fire associations across this province in some of the smaller municipalities that depend heavily on volunteers to provide adequate service to their communities. This is a significant public safety issue. I am working on this. I can assure the member and other members of the House that I am planning to take proposals to my colleagues and hopefully to the House in the not-too-distant future.

#### AIR QUALITY

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, as you know, Ontario has some of the dirtiest air in North America. Smog contributes to the deaths of some 1,900 Ontarians every single year. Childhood asthma rates have quadrupled in the last 20 years. The single greatest cause of admission for children into Ontario hospitals is asthma aggravated by smog.

As you well know, the Minister of Energy has a plan to introduce diesel-powered supplementary generation into Ontario communities for this summer. I'm just wondering where you stand on this issue, Minister. I'm wondering how you can possibly justify, as defender of the environment, as defender of the interest of Ontarians when it comes to the right to breathe in clean air this summer, how is it that you can possibly support this move by the Minister of Energy to bring filthy diesel-fired supplementary generation into Ontario communities this summer?

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I'm not certain that your definition of "plan" is quite accurate. I think what the Minister of Energy has provided you with is an outline due to an emergency. I hope—and I suppose we all hope—that this does not come about. From the Ministry of the Environment's point—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I'm sorry?

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Order.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** From the Ministry of the Environment's point of view, we've made a number of initiatives to clean up the air in the province of Ontario. We've taken great steps to clean up those coal-fired

plants, and we all agree that the best-case scenario would be to have the coal-fired plants closed. We've made it a commitment in 2005 to close Lakeview, and in 2015 to close the other two in this shed that are operating.

We take the environment very, very seriously. We believe in clean air, and I think if you look at the initiatives that we've brought forward as a government, including Drive Clean—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** It would be helpful if Smitherman wouldn't talk because we'd have even cleaner air. But including Drive Clean, we have made a number of initiatives. We've been very focused on cleaner air, and we'll continue to do so.

**Mr McGuinty:** It's just as I thought, Minister: you cannot defend the indefensible. It is simply not acceptable in Ontario, at the beginning of the 21st century, in a highly technologically developed jurisdiction, that we're going to introduce into Ontario communities this summer, after we've been experiencing a record number of smog days—we had 27 last summer. It is completely unacceptable for us to bring in filthy diesel-fired supplementary generation into Ontario communities.

It reflects kind of a laissez-faire intellectual bankruptcy. Surely we can do better than this. What about an aggressive plan for energy conservation? What about enlisting the support of Ontarians when it comes to reducing electricity usage this summer? Is it not less expensive for us to get people to conserve than it is for us to add supplementary filthy electricity this summer? Again, Minister, I ask you in your capacity as defender of the environment and as defender of the right of seniors and children in particular to breathe in clean air this summer, how can you possibly stand there and do nothing while your Minister of Energy says he's going to go ahead and put in those filthy supplementary diesel-fired generators this summer?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** What is truly breathtaking is that you have the gall to stand in your place and talk about closing coal-fired plants when merely a few seats down the front row of your front bench, your Minister of the Environment operated in this province for five years, and didn't close one plant or shut one day of coal-fired burning plants. Now you stand in your place demanding administrations past who have committed to closing coal-fired plants to move forward upon closing. That is the unmitigated gall and unbelievable nature of a Liberal. When you have the levers of power to do something, you sit on your thumbs. When you're in opposition, you've got wonderful ideas you can't afford or implement because when you get into government, you realize you put guys into the Ministry of Environment and they couldn't close one minute of coal-fired plants in this province, and that's what we're doing.

1520

#### VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** My question is—

*Interjections.*



**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** We'll wait so we can hear you. The member for York North.

**Mrs Munro:** My question is for the Attorney General. Since this government was elected we have made great strides in ensuring that Ontario is a safe place to live, work and raise a family. One of the initiatives that I am proud of as a member of this government is our commitment to ensuring that victims of crime receive the services and support they need.

Last week the Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness, which is located in Newmarket in my riding of York North, received a grant for \$47,500 from this government. This investment was made possible through our research and revictimization prevention grants program. I was wondering if the Attorney General could inform this House about the program and how it is able to assist the victims of crime, especially women and children, to receive the services they need and to help prevent victimization in the future.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** I'm pleased to say that last Friday the Eves government provided 10 organizations across our province with a total sum of over \$450,000 to assist victims of crime. All of this money will be used in local communities, as we believe that is where the money can be best spent.

As part of the Eves government's \$2.5-million research and revictimization prevention grants program, the Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness will develop a pilot follow-up service for children and families in the child victim/witness program after the court preparation process is complete. This investment will help provide additional information and support for children and youth who are struggling with the court process.

These 10 organizations are the first to receive grants from this program. I am pleased to state that this worthy program is funded from our victims' justice fund. Money for the fund is collected through a victim fine surcharge applied to provincial and federal fines and it is dedicated solely for providing services to victims. This was an initiative of our government and we're proud of it.

**Mrs Munro:** Thank you for your response, Minister. I'm proud to be a member of a government that places emphasis on the rights of victims of crime. For instance, I know my constituents applaud this government's initiatives such as the Victims' Bill of Rights and the Victim Empowerment Act, which allows the victim to attend and make a presentation at Ontario parole board hearings.

I was wondering if the Attorney General could inform this House and the people of Ontario of some of the other communities that will benefit from these grants that will be of benefit to victims of crime and briefly explain for what the grant money will be used.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Again, this government has focused more on victims' services than any previous government, and we are known in North America as leaders in this area.

With regard to some of those 10 other grants, I can inform the House that the women and children who use

services of the Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka will receive an organizational benefit of \$22,000. This money will be invested in a project that bridges the gap in services for sexually abused children and their families. This project will see the formation of a peer support group for parents and a structured children's activity group focused on enhancing self-esteem and social skills for the affected children and their siblings.

The Waterloo regional branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association will receive almost \$50,000 to support the development of the infrastructure of services for male victims of sexual assault and trauma, including a toll-free telephone support service and the creation of workshops with professional community-based therapists.

All of these grants are to worthwhile groups like the three we have found out about today. We will continue to support these community groups as they deliver the services even better than the province can.

#### MEDICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is to the Minister of Health. Today we are joined in the gallery by Irene Hsu. Mrs Hsu lost her husband last month. She says that your government's Medical Review Committee and its controversial audits of physicians are responsible.

As you know, Dr Anthony Hsu went through enormous stress after undergoing an unjust and punitive Medical Review Committee audit. Will you do the right thing today and, in the name of Dr Hsu, call an immediate moratorium on Medical Review Committee audits and an independent review of the entire process?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Certainly, my condolences are with the Hsu family. I'm sure that the honourable member will understand that I will not comment any further on the circumstances of the untimely death of Dr Hsu.

I would, however, like to comment on the Medical Review Committee and the nature of the innovations that we are pursuing there. As the honourable member probably knows, in 2001-02, the last year that I have full details for, there were only 98 audits done out of 20,000 physicians practising in Ontario. I wanted to put it in the proper context.

Having said that, the honourable member might be aware that in January of this year, we already implemented a new process giving physicians a chance to work with the ministry through an alternative dispute resolution mechanism, rather than going through the MRC route. We think that that's an innovation. The honourable member is probably aware that I've already decided to conduct a review of the MRC and the audit process. I announced that April 10 at the Ontario Medical Association annual meeting.

**Mr Hampton:** You would know that in communities across this province physicians are working endless hours to make up for the serious shortage of family doctors.

What do they get? Very often, they get punished in the form of a Medical Review Committee audit. Dr Nishan Jayawardene of Fonthill, a preventive health specialist, is closing his practice June 30 because of Medical Review Committee intimidation.

You know that family physicians have come to you and said, "Something is seriously wrong here." Will you freeze the process and call for an independent review, or will you wait until more doctors close their practices, or worse?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Let's be clear on what the intention of the Medical Review Committee is. It reviews and audits billings to the taxpayers of Ontario by medical professionals like physicians. We find out whether all of the insured services were in fact rendered, whether the service was medically necessary, whether it was in accordance with accepted professional standards and practice, whether there was any inadvertent, I'm sure in many cases, but nonetheless present, misrepresentation. I do believe it is important to have some form of review mechanism to protect the integrity of the Ontario health insurance plan.

Having said that, I'm firmly of the view, as I believe the honourable member is, that it is time to review the review and to ensure that we are using the best practices and the fairest practices for the medical profession, as well as for the taxpayers of Ontario.

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** My question is for the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation.

Eight long years and your government has taken our auto industry for granted. You've done so despite the fact that our auto industry is responsible for one out of every six jobs in Ontario. The results are telling. We've not attracted a new assembly plant to Ontario in over a decade. During the same time, 19 plants were located in the United States and investment in Mexico doubled. Last week's throne speech proved that nothing has changed. The auto sector didn't warrant even a single word in the throne speech. This, at a time when you've taken the last five months negotiating with DaimlerChrysler to secure a new plant in Windsor worth 2,500 jobs, and an agreement has yet to be reached. You are even quibbling about how much you're being asked for with DaimlerChrysler.

With the auto sector not warranting even a single word in the throne speech, does Ernie Eves not get it? Does he not understand that without a thriving auto sector our economy won't grow?

1530

**Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** The member is apparently unfamiliar with provisions of the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund, particularly the \$625 million that was announced two months ago by the Premier on the floor at General Motors in Oshawa, and was

greeted with praise, not only by the Big Five, but also by the parts industry and by the Canadian Auto Workers. This is a very important initiative in Ontario, as we seek not only to maintain but to grow the automotive sector in the province of Ontario. In fact—and the member for Windsor should know about this—DaimlerChrysler has been negotiating not only with her federal Liberal counterparts but with us in Ontario, looking to create quite a dramatic new initiative in the county of Essex.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Supplementary?

**Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** This may be news to your government and to that minister himself, who in the past has argued quite vociferously against cash to help locate plants in this province. Auto plants and auto parts manufacturers mean more than photo ops and places to give half-baked budgets. They support jobs, they support growth in this economy, and your government's been all but silent on the automotive industry. That \$600 million was a re-announcement, it was not particular to the automotive sector, and you still have not resolved the Chrysler situation in Windsor.

Not only will a proper level of investment by your government benefit Windsor through Chrysler, it will benefit cities like Chatham, St Thomas, Oshawa, Oakville, Kitchener-Waterloo and London. Minister, unlike you, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have real plan, a plan that has been endorsed by Ed Brust, the chairman of Chrysler corporation; it's been endorsed by Dennis DesRosiers; it's been endorsed by Buzz Hargrove. Why won't your government get off its thumbs, invest in the auto sector and help bring those jobs and growth to this economy? You've been asleep far, far too long.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Flaherty:** I got you on that. But what I want to know is what the Liberals opposite have against skills training, what do they have against infrastructure and what do they have against research and development in the automotive sector in the province of Ontario? What do they have against Ford Motor Co building their new van, starting in September, in Oakville, Ontario? What do they have against Toyota, for the first time in the history of that company, building their premium brand Lexus in Cambridge, Ontario? What do they have against Honda motor company building their brand-new Pilot in Alliston, Ontario? What do they have against DaimlerChrysler building their brand-new Pacifica—you can see them on the roads now—in Windsor, Ontario?

We've had tremendous growth in the auto sector, not only in those sectors but in the parts sectors. What do they have against CAMI building their new vehicle in Ingersoll, Ontario? What do they have against three shifts being run full tilt at General Motors in Oshawa? What have you got against the success of the auto industry in Ontario?

#### HERITAGE CONSERVATION

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Culture. I understand that



the Ontario Museum Association has officially launched the third annual May is Museum Month. As we know, museums, art galleries and historic sites provide reflections of our past and present culture. These important resources are critical to understanding who we are and how important Ontario has become as a great place in which to live.

I know this government is very dedicated to heritage preservation. Just last fall, our government passed Bill 179, which included amendments to the Heritage Act, improving and updating the municipal designation processes. I also understand that your parliamentary assistant, the member for York North, has just completed a consultation process with all key stakeholders concerned with heritage preservation to determine how the ministry could improve the act further.

Minister, could you tell this House a little bit about the 2003 May is Museum Month initiative and how we, as members of this House, can get involved?

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture):** I thank the member for Scarborough Centre for the question. First of all, I would like to applaud the Ontario Museum Association, particularly Anne Chafe, who is the president of the OMA, and Marie Lalonde, the executive director.

About this time last year we were at Doon Heritage Crossroads, a museum out in Kitchener, with Mr Wettlaufer and Mr Arnott, along with Marie and Anne, manning an old pumper to celebrate Museum Month.

It's important. Museums play an integral role in the culture of our small communities and our large communities and remind us all about our heritage, which leads me to the second part of what the member from Scarborough Centre was saying.

I want to thank Julia Munro for the role she has played in the consultation in terms of the Heritage Act. There are very important new things we can be doing to bolster the Heritage Act and preserve our historical buildings in this province. This consultation we had, along with other suggestions from our stakeholders, hopefully will move us forward to protect more of our historical buildings so that all of us can enjoy them for future generations.

**Ms Mushinski:** Thank you, Minister. I know I'll certainly be visiting my local museum, which is the Scarborough Historical Museum. As a founding member of the Scarborough Historical Museum's board, I'm particularly proud that my local museum is a living memory of our rural past, located in Thomson Memorial Park. I think it's important that we do plug our own museums.

Minister, I know that the Scarborough Historical Museum is one of over 200 museums in Ontario that receives the community museum operating grant from your ministry. I know too that you, before becoming an MPP, were the chair of the Markham District Historical Museum in your own great riding of Markham. I do appreciate and respect your familiarity with the need for our museums. I know that this experience would have

given you a valuable perspective on the importance and challenges of local museums, and I'm wondering, Minister, if you could tell this House how this grant supports our museums.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** Our ministry provides approximately \$2.7 million to the museums across this province to encourage them in doing their fine work.

I will take the opportunity right now, since it is Museum Month, to congratulate my own museum, the Markham museum, and the chairman, Gunter Langhorst, for the role they're doing. I might say as well that on May 11 at my museum, the Markham museum, we're having a Mother's Day tea. So here's an opportunity for people to visit my museum and learn about it.

I will say this about the Scarborough Historical Museum. What they're going to do this month is have an historic perspective of Agincourt. I grew up in Agincourt. I think it's a very important event for us, because we learned at that time, through our museums, about pioneers like David and Mary Thomson and also about the First Nations burial grounds at Taber Hill.

These are things our children and grandchildren can learn. I thank our museums and hope we can all participate in Museum Month.

#### PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

**Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's):** My question is to the Minister of Energy. It's with respect to the promised investigation into the delays at Pickering. We were supposed to get information within days of the November announcement. We didn't. Months have passed. What happened?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** The member opposite is indeed correct. We did commit—the Premier, the government, and I as energy minister did—to conduct a review into the situation at Pickering A, both in terms of the reasons and the reasonableness of the timelines and of the costs associated with refurbishing the first, and then four of the reactors at Pickering. We also would seek advice for the people of the province of Ontario, through their elected representatives. We've sought to find someone, or some people, with sufficient experience, particularly with respect to the scientific nature of the project—nuclear technology and public sector and private sector management. We will be coming forward in short order with just that.

1540

**Mr Bryant:** Well, we get no answer. Not days have passed, not weeks have passed, but months have passed since this has been promised. Not only can the government not manage delays into the Pickering refurbishment, you can't manage delays into the investigation into the delays at the Pickering refurbishment. This government's Pickering refurbishment is more than three years past its deadline, and counting. The budget for the Pickering refurbishment has more than doubled. The

investigation was promised months ago and nothing has happened, and it seems that the only contribution this government has provided to energy supply has been in screaming diesel, black-smoke-belching generators that are truly a symbol and a disgrace. Why would anybody in this province trust this government to manage electricity supply in Ontario?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I, like my colleagues, have missed the rhetoric of the member opposite and the hot air that he has spewed. To address the main issue with respect to the question, I will tell the honourable member that when we do announce the review, I'm sure he'll be very pleased with it.

## PETITIONS

### AMBULANCE SERVICES

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane):** This is a petition to solve the staffing crisis at Ontario's ambulance dispatch centres.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the 12 ambulance dispatch centres run by the provincial government are chronically short-staffed;

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has admitted that only 30% of our new hires are staying;

"Whereas the government-commissioned report by the IBI Group of October 2001 said that the rapid turnover in staff is attributed to high workload, stress and relatively low wages;

"Whereas the IBI Group report said the dispatchers at other emergency services 'earn considerably higher wages for relatively lower workloads';

"Whereas the dispatching of ambulances is a key link in the chain of emergency response;

"Whereas the report recommended increasing the wages of provincial ambulance dispatchers to reflect the current market and the complexity of dispatcher functions;

"Whereas the report said that this would 'reduce the high staff turnover and attract qualified staff';

"Whereas chronic short-staffing and high staff turnover at our ambulance dispatch centres is a major risk to public safety;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To protect our emergency health services and the health and safety of Ontario citizens, the Ontario government must immediately and fully implement all the recommendations of the IBI Group report, including wage parity with other emergency service dispatch centres."

### CENTRES DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRES

**M<sup>me</sup> Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** J'aimerais présenter une pétition de la part de plusieurs des citoyens et citoyennes dans mon comté.

« Un centre de santé communautaire comme celui de Chelmsford offre une gamme de services qui aident ma communauté à améliorer sa santé globale. Mon centre répond à de nombreux besoins dans ma région, mais il manque cruellement un financement adéquat pour maintenir son haut niveau de qualité.

« Comme citoyenne de l'Ontario, je vous prie de considérer mon centre de santé dans votre réforme et de ne pas oublier les centres communautaires comme le mien qui attendent la chance d'avoir leur centre à eux. »

Je suis en faveur de cette pétition.

### WATER EXTRACTION

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** This morning at about a quarter to eight, two of my constituents came to see me at my constituency office: Mr Keith Ritchie and Ms Burna Wilton. They gave me a substantial petition containing over 2,000 signatures. I'll read it to the House at this time.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas taking water for sale purposes is now recognized by Parliament as a great concern to Ontario residents; and

"Whereas the township of Centre Wellington has: (a) commissioned a comprehensive groundwater management study funded by MOE grant, recently completed but not yet fully assessed; (b) undertaken development of two additional wells to service current demand and modest future development in the major urban centres; (c) implemented strict conservation bylaws for domestic usage, and begun water metering for all usage (commencing 2003) in these same major urban centres; (d) has not yet evaluated impacts on more than 2,000 private wells lying outside the major urban areas which may be susceptible to the pumping of both municipal and other private wells; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment is currently considering an application under section 34 of the Ontario Water Resources Act for a permit to take a daily volume of 1,091,040 litres from a site in Centre Wellington township, a volume nearly equivalent to the daily consumption of the former village of Elora (more or less 3,000 of the 21,000 inhabitants of the township);

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Freeze all current applications for permits to take water for commercial (sale) purposes subject to review of legislation correlating provincial responsibility with municipal responsibility for usage of these resources, considering both local requirements and those of private commercial interests;



"(2) Expedite revision of current legislation governing these valuable water resources so that constituents have some substantial protection from the influence, on local groundwater supply, of pumping wells for the commercial sale of water;

"(3) Instruct the Ministry of the Environment to institute more comprehensive testing to establish the area of influence on groundwater supplies before issuing a permit to take water for pumping large volumes of water from a well adjacent to other wells; and

"(4) Clarify the meaning of the water-taking and transfer regulation introduced in 1999, which purports to prohibit the transfer of water from Ontario's major water basins."

Again, this was signed by in excess of 2,000 people, mostly residents of Waterloo-Wellington, and I've affixed my signature to the top of it as per the rules of the House.

### HYDRO RATES

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I have petitions signed by hundreds, if not thousands, of people in the district of Algoma.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has mismanaged the electricity policy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas last fall the McGuinty Liberal call for rebates, although fiercely rejected by the government, gained huge public support. With no options open, the government introduced and passed a plan to rebate \$75 to customers and place a cap on electricity commodity prices at .043 per kilowatt hour;

"Whereas Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance;

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into a fund for rural rate assistance; and

"Whereas rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have rural rate assistance extended to the Great Lakes Power service area immediately."

I totally agree with this petition and affix my signature.

### MINIMUM WAGE

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** J'ai une pétition ici signée par beaucoup des résidents de la communauté de Timmins qui lit telle suivie :

"To the Ontario provincial Legislature:

"Because the minimum wage has been frozen at \$6.85 since 1995 despite increases in the cost of living; and

"Because a full-time worker earning the current minimum wage in a large city is \$5,904 below the poverty line, and to reach the poverty line they would need an hourly wage of at least \$10 an hour;

"Because the minimum wage should provide people with an adequate standard of living;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the minimum wage to at least the poverty line ... and index it to the cost of living."

I affix my signature to that petition and ask people to go to [www.publicpower.ca](http://www.publicpower.ca), where they'll see that commitment in the Howard Hampton campaign.

### ALUMINUM SMELTER

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition with 400 names on it, including that of John Taylor of York North, which reads as follows—it's regarding the cleanup of the abandoned smelter in Georgina:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding the Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads into the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full environmental assessment of this site followed by a cleanup of the full smelter site."

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** These petitions were sent to me by local 27, CAW, located in London, Ontario. They read as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government increased fees paid by Ontario seniors and other vulnerable people living in long-term-care facilities by 15% instead of providing adequate government funding for long-term care;

"Whereas the Conservative government has therefore shifted the costs of long-term care on to the backs of the frail elderly and their families;

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas in 1996 Ontario abandoned its minimum requirement of 2.25 hours of nursing care per nursing home resident;

"Whereas the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day;

"Whereas according to the government's own study, government cutbacks have resulted in Ontario seniors receiving just 14 minutes a day of care from a registered nurse;

"Whereas the report also found that Ontario residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care of nine other comparable locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:"

We demand “the Conservative government eliminate the 15% fee increase for residents of long-term-care facilities, increase the number of nursing care hours for each resident to a minimum of 3.5 hours per day, and provide stable, increased funding to ensure quality care is there for Ontario residents of long-term-care facilities.”

I agree with the petitioners.

1550

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** Mr Speaker, the government’s lack of support for the long-term-care sector continues to be a real crisis. Over the winter months a new campaign by the Ontario Long Term Care Association delivered hundreds and hundreds of letters to each of our ridings. If I may, I will read petitions from the last session that are left over. I do want to do that, sir.

“Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the increase in the government’s own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas according to the government’s own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario’s long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels.”

There are hundreds and hundreds of signatures on these petitions, and I’m very pleased to sign it.

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have petitions sent to me from people from Woodbridge. They read as follows:

“Whereas 70% of Ontario women with children under age 12 are in the paid workforce;

“Whereas high-quality, safe, affordable child care is critical to them and their families;

“Whereas the Early Years Study done for the Conservative government by Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain concluded quality child care enhances early childhood development;

“Whereas this government has cut funding for regulated child care instead of supporting Ontario families by investing in early learning and care;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario government adopt the NDP’s \$10-a-day child care plan, and begin implementation by reducing full child care fees to \$10 a day for children aged two to five currently enrolled in regulated”—non-profit—“child care; by providing capital funds to expand existing child care centres and build new ones; by funding pay equity for staff; and by creating”—20,000—“new \$10-a-day child care spaces in the province.”

I agree with the petitioners, and I have affixed my signature to this.

#### HIGHWAY 69

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

“Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

“Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

“Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of a government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so”—especially with Highway 69 south, between Sudbury and Parry Sound;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease.”

Of course, I affix my signature to this petition.

#### OHIP SERVICES

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition signed by 300 residents of Keewatin and Kenora which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Harris government’s decision to delist hearing aid evaluation and re-evaluation from OHIP coverage will lead to untreated hearing loss; and

“Whereas these restrictions will cut off access to diagnostic hearing tests, especially in geographic regions



of the province already experiencing difficulties due to shortages of specialty physicians; and

"Whereas OHIP will no longer cover the cost of miscellaneous therapeutic procedures, including physical therapy and therapeutic exercise; and

"Whereas services no longer covered by OHIP may include thermal therapy, ultrasound therapy, hydrotherapy, massage therapy,... nerve therapy stimulation and biofeedback; and

"Whereas one of the few publicly covered alternatives includes hospital outpatient clinics where waiting lists for such services are up to six months long; and

"Whereas delisting these services has had a detrimental effect on the health of all Ontarians, especially seniors, children, hearing-impaired people and industrial workers; and

"Whereas the government has already delisted \$100 million worth of OHIP services,

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately restore OHIP coverage for these delisted services."

I agree with the petitioners.

#### WASTE MANAGEMENT

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario awarded Canadian Waste Services Inc a certificate of approval for the operation of the Richmond landfill in greater Napanee; and

"Whereas XCG Consultants' findings have identified that 'landfill operations are having a statistically significant negative impact on surface water quality in the area'; and whereas groundwater needs further independent hydrogeological study to determine the migration of the landfill leachate;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully call upon the Ontario Ministry of the Environment to direct Canadian Waste Services to provide and install water filtration and disinfection equipment in those homes within 10 miles of the Richmond landfill."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

#### DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2003, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** Let me just say that it's good to be back, Speaker. It's good to see you here.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Four and a half months later.

**Mr McGuinty:** Yes, it's been a long, long time, and we are happy to be back. We should have come back a long time ago. But that having been said, unlike the Ernie Eves government, we can't wait to get to work for the people of Ontario. Unlike the Ernie Eves government, we believe Ontarians deserve a lot better than what they've been getting. We believe quite simply that it's time for a change in Ontario, and I mean real, positive change.

We've got a strong team, we've got good ideas, and we're the only party that represents real change. The Tories, if we were to allow them to do so, would only bring us more of the same. The NDP, on the other hand, would bring us back to that painful experience of their government in the 1990s. The Ontario Liberal Party is the only party that represents real change in Ontario. That's what I want to talk about today, the change that we're going to bring to Ontario.

But let me just say this at the outset about the throne speech. It seems to me that when the best thing you can say about a throne speech is that the government stole a few good policies, then that government is long past its expiry date.

C'est un document cynique. Il me semble que lorsque la meilleure chose qu'on puisse dire à propos d'un discours du trône est que le gouvernement a volé quelques bonnes politiques, il est grand temps de repenser à ce gouvernement.

This throne speech, like the government itself, begs some fundamental questions. Where's the energy? Where's the imagination? Where's the vision? Where is that passionate drive to improve life for Ontarians? Where is the leadership? All these things are missing as much from this throne speech as they are from this government. This is a tired, smug, self-contented government. They're more than just satisfied with the status quo; they are very proud of it.

Let's take a moment to look at that record of which the Tories are so very proud. After all, the Tories have had eight years now, and I think it's important to ask ourselves, what is it that they have left us with? I'll touch very briefly on five items.

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Here's the first: seven out of 10 Ontario elementary schools don't have enough textbooks. Five out of 10 of our students are failing standardized tests. The government's plan for the future? They want to put \$500 million into private schools and they want to bring unqualified teachers into public schools.

Point number two: 900,000 Ontarians can't find a family doctor. This government has made such deep cuts to our health care system, and our public health care system in particular, that it has seriously compromised our ability—the ability, in fact, of dedicated front-line workers—to fight frightening diseases like West Nile and SARS. What is the government's plan for the future? To put \$3.2 billion into tax breaks for large corporations as a greater priority than a strong health care system.

Point number three: we're breaking records every summer now when it comes to smog days. What is this government's plan for the future? To put diesel generators into Ontario communities.

Point number four: since the Walkerton tragedy, more Ontarians than ever before have been buying bottled water, even those families that can't afford to do so. They're doing that because they don't trust their tap water. What is this government's plan for the future? This government keeps dithering and stalling instead of bringing in tough laws protecting our drinking water from pollution.

The last point: as financial managers, this government has added \$21 billion to the debt.

Also, a point worth keeping in mind: they sold the 407 for a song and they sold out Ontarians who use that highway. Their plan? Well, their plan is to continue to act irresponsibly. They have a \$2.2-billion hole in their budget and they have no idea whatsoever as to how they're going to fill that hole.

That is just a snippet of this government's real record and its bleak plans for the future.

Now, I don't want to be entirely negative. There are some good ideas in this throne speech.

For example, ending mandatory retirement is a good idea. That's why our colleague Mike Colle introduced a bill that would have done that last year—congratulations to you, Mike—which begs the question: why did the Tories vote against Mike Colle's bill?

Another good idea: seizing the cars of repeat drunk drivers. That's why our colleague Rick Bartolucci introduced his bill twice. He introduced that bill twice, which again begs the same question: why did the government vote against it, not only once but twice?

The throne speech says that we need more police. So why did the Tories criticize our plan to put 1,000 more police on the streets?

Then there are those promises found within the throne speech that were already made by the government but never kept. They promised to limit waiting times for cancer radiology to four weeks back in 1999. That hasn't happened. Why should anyone believe that they'll keep their promise this time?

Public school choice: this is an idea of ours that they stole last year, promised to do and then didn't. Same question: why should anyone believe they'll keep their promise this time?

This government is tired. They haven't come up with an original idea in years, except that utterly original and completely idiotic budget infomercial idea.

While I think of it, I want to offer congratulations to our colleague Sean Conway. If viewers didn't get an opportunity to watch Mr Conway in action last Thursday, then I would strongly recommend that they visit Hansard on-line and collect that speech. Sean reminds us what this place is all about. He reminds us of the richness of our traditions and our shared responsibility to respect and uphold those traditions.

C'est le temps de changement. C'est le temps de se donner un gouvernement qui va s'occuper des Ontariens et Ontariennes au lieu de quelques-uns de ses amis et de ses partisans.

It's time for a government that will build public schools to offer our kids the best education they can get, instead of a government that hands half a billion dollars to private schools.

It's time for a government that will commit to universal public medicare, instead of a government that favours a two-tier, pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care system.

It's time for a government that will protect the environment, our air and our water, as part of an absolute commitment to public safety, instead of a government that views public safety as something you trade off for efficiencies.

It's time for a government that will build a strong economy with the best workforce and a great quality of life for all Ontarians, instead of a one-trick-pony government that has never been able to see past handing billions of dollars to large corporations.

The things I've just listed are things that we actually and deeply believe in. They weren't cooked up in a back room by unelected consultants who care a lot about winning but couldn't care less about good government. These are the things that we believe this province needs. They are what we believe the people of Ontario want. So instead of playing games with democracy, instead of cynical pre-election manoeuvring, we're presenting the people of Ontario with a plan to get them what they want and what they need, because fundamentally, we believe that is the role of government.

We have actually been presenting our plan to the people of Ontario for the past eight months. I would like to take the opportunity today to present it to Ontarians again so that it strikes a real, sharp contrast with last week's collection of empty promises and stolen policies.

Our plan for the economy is called Achieving our Potential. We call it that because, as a province, we're not; we're not achieving our potential. We're not even coming close.

In 1995, the productivity gap between Ontario and the US was roughly \$3,000 per person. Today, it's \$6,000. It has doubled. When it comes to productivity, which just means our ability to create wealth, 30 of 50 US states now outperform our province. This is the single greatest economic challenge that we face. We must close that productivity gap. If we don't, we'll lose jobs, we'll lose investment, we'll lose our ability to support health care and education, and our quality of life will erode.

Our plan to close that productivity gap, our plan for the economy, starts with fiscal discipline, something my friends in the government could use a little of.

We're going to balance our budgets, the same budgets that we're going to deliver in the Legislature, where they belong.

We will not add to the debt. This government has added \$21 billion to the province's debt, and they owe an



apology to the next generation of Ontarians, whom they are going to stick with that debt.

While they are at it, they might want to apologize to this generation of Ontarians for the hundreds of millions of tax dollars that they continue to waste. I'm talking about \$600 million on high-priced consultants. I'm talking about \$250 million on government self-promotional advertising.

Our government will use consultants only when absolutely necessary and when there is nobody in the public service to do that work. By the way, let me add this: we're going to celebrate public service in the province of Ontario.

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We are going to extend an invitation to Ontario's youth. We're going to invite our best and our brightest to commit themselves once again to public service in the service of all Ontarians. I want to send a message to those people who labour day after day, day in and day out, because they've had too much negative propaganda from this government for too long. We count on those people. They do a fine job. It's about time that this government should start to listen to their advice and take them into account.

As for those partisan government ads paid for with tax dollars, we're going to make that illegal. We're going to make sure that the Provincial Auditor has the power to enforce that. Here's my sense: I think the bloom has come off that advertising rose. I think when people now see those expensive ads running on our television sets nightly, they're getting close to being physically ill. If we have health care dollars in the province of Ontario, those dollars shouldn't be going into health care ads, they should be going into our hospitals. If we have money for education in the province of Ontario, that money shouldn't be going to education ads; it should be going into our classrooms.

Our plan is to keep taxes down. We're not going to ask families and small businesses to give us any more of their hard-earned money. What we're going to do is invest the money that we do have wisely. To that end, we will not go ahead with a \$3.2-billion tax cut that this government has promised large corporations. Our corporate taxes are already 10% lower than in the US. Cutting them further at this time will just lead to more cuts to services Ontarians desperately need. We won't do that. It would be nice to cut taxes further now, but we feel that it would be even nicer to know that there are enough textbooks in our schools, that our drinking water is protected and that our health care system is ready for the next SARS-type outbreak.

We'll leave it to the Tories to engage in a race to the bottom with Alabama. We'll leave it to the Tories to make the cynical promise that they can somehow cut taxes by over \$5 billion, repair the public services they so badly damaged and still balance the budget. The Tories are making promises that they can't keep. We're being straight with Ontarians so we can keep our promises.

We're going to build a great economy. We understand that the foundation of a great economy today is a strong

workforce. We're going to build the best in North America. In a world where you can borrow your capital, where you can buy your raw materials and where you can copy your technology, we over here in our party understand that the only thing left on which to build a high-wage economy is skills. We intend to develop the best workforce in North America right here in Ontario.

Our plan to build the best workforce in North America starts with a first-class post-secondary education system. We're going to open up 50,000 new spaces in our colleges and universities. We're going to freeze tuition for two years and improve student assistance. We're going to hire the faculty that we so desperately need. Under this government, Ontario now ranks—

*Interjection.*

**Mr McGuinty:** I'm sure that the minister opposite would be very interested in this statistic. Ontario now ranks 56th out of 60 states and provinces when it comes to investment in our colleges and universities. We're going to change that because we understand over here that you can't lead from the back of the pack. I can tell you that our commitment to learning extends far beyond the classroom. We're going to invest in training programs. We're going to offer a tax credit to businesses to help workers upgrade their skills. We're going to double the number of apprenticeships in this province, and we're going to break down those barriers that prevent qualified new Ontarians from entering the workforce.

On this challenge we have before us today, which is to ensure that all Ontarians are at their best, which is the challenge that we have set for ourselves, it just doesn't make any sense, not today, to invite highly skilled and educated people from distant parts of the world to come and move to Ontario and to bring their families here. It doesn't make any sense for us to tell them, "You're going to have to sit this one out. What we'll do is we'll make sure the kids find opportunity. We'll make sure the kids have access to good education. We'll make sure that you all have access to good health care." It doesn't make any sense to say to the parents, not today, not in the knowledge economy, that they're going to have to sit this one out. Understanding that that human capital—which is not the greatest expression in the world—that those skills and that development that has been paid for by taxpayers living in other parts of the world—it doesn't make any sense not to capitalize on that talent and that potential. We will break down every single barrier which stands in the way of getting foreign-trained professionals and tradespeople into the Ontario workforce.

At the end of the day, we need a government which understands that growing an economy requires energy, innovation and a drive to bring in new investment and better jobs.

It would have been nice to hear something in the throne speech about the auto sector, the engine that drives this province's economy, because frankly the government has been missing in action on this file. The auto sector accounts for one in six jobs in this province. This industry is our single greatest productivity champion. No

one makes a quality car more efficiently than Ontario—no one. There are huge successes here on which to build. Just one new assembly plant would create, on average, 1,000 new direct jobs and 7,000 more in parts, steel and support industries. In the last 10 years, the US has landed 19 new assembly plants; we haven't landed a single one, and we're not going to get any as long as the government continues to sit on the sidelines. I can tell you that where I come from, 19-0 is a lousy score.

Our government is going to get off the bench, get into the game and we're going to play to win. We're going to have access to, should we earn the privilege—and we're working as hard as we can to do this. Should we earn the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government, I'm going to use the government plane; I'm going to get Buzz Hargrove into that plane; I'm going to get execs from the auto sector into that plane. We'll go to Detroit, we'll go to wherever we have to go on the face of this planet and, together, we're going to make a compelling, overwhelming argument to the effect that there is no better place in the world to set up a new assembly plant than in our province.

We're not going to sit on our hands. The world is passing our province by while this government says, "Well, we've cut your taxes. What more do you people want?" I can tell you, those truly successful, highly competitive economies are those where they have established a strong partnership with labour, government and business pulling together, and we look forward to doing that.

Now let me tell you about our plan for education; we call it Excellence for All. We believe there is simply no better investment that we can make in our children, in ourselves and in our future than through a quality public education system.

1620

I have come to the conclusion that if we get public education right, if we get it right for all our kids, most of the other things in life will line up very nicely, both for them and for us. They'll get better jobs; we'll get a stronger economy. They'll become better citizens; we'll all get a stronger and more caring society.

Our plan for excellence in public education starts with scrapping this government's handout to private schools. We'll put that money where it belongs: in the public school system.

Our plan includes smaller class sizes, a better curriculum and a revised funding formula along the lines suggested by Rozanski. Right now in Ontario there are good schools—and I mean viable schools that are meeting the educational needs of their students—that are closing in our rural and northern communities because of the flaws in that funding formula. We're going to protect those schools and we're going to fix that formula.

Some studies have come out recently which demonstrate that some of our very best learning takes place in a smaller school environment. That's why in a number of US states now they are taking their larger high schools and even their larger elementary schools and dividing

them into three or four sub-schools. It turns out that in a smaller learning environment, where teachers know the students, know something about your brother and your sister, know something about your parents, know when you're not supposed to be in the hallway, that has a positive impact on the learning environment.

We have also learned that in our smaller schools in rural and northern Ontario, they tend to have a higher school spirit. They tend to have less absenteeism. They tend to have less tardiness. They tend to have more participation in extracurricular activities. They tend to have a better learning environment. So why is it that the government is permitting to have on the books a funding formula that is leading to the extermination of those smaller schools in rural and northern Ontario? We're going to protect those schools.

We're going to keep young people learning until the age of 18, because we know that gives them the best chance at a future that is healthy, prosperous and bright. I know we've all seen 16-year-olds hanging around in malls with nothing to do and nowhere to go. In our vision for the economy, we need everybody at their best, so we're not going to give up on our young people.

It saddens us that half our children are failing Ontario's standardized tests. The real tragedy here is not that children are failing the tests; it's that we have a government that is failing our kids. We're offering a guarantee to the people of Ontario that this situation will not continue. By the end of our first mandate, the number of children passing province-wide tests will have risen to 75%, and we'll be happy to answer to the voters of Ontario for that promise.

That, briefly, is our commitment to education, and we'll stack it up against this government's commitment to cutting education any day of the week.

The next plank in our platform is what we call Growing Strong Communities. That plank starts with our unequivocal commitment to shut down our filthy coal-fired power plants by 2007. Did you know, Mr Speaker, that smog kills 1,900 Ontarians every year? Did you know that childhood asthma has quadrupled in the last 20 years? Did you know that we had a record 27 smog days in Ontario last summer? The government says it would like to shut down those plants by 2015. We say that 2015 is too late, that it's eight years too late. By 2007, we're going to have cleaner air in this province, come hell or high water.

By way of practical experience in these matters, California built 7,500 megawatts of clean energy in one and a half years. Surely in Ontario we can replace 7,500 coal-fired generating watts in four years.

We're going to protect our water by implementing every single recommendation of the Walkerton report, and we're going to crack down on polluters and preserve precious green space in Ontario. We'll tackle urban sprawl and we'll reduce gridlock. We'll also clean up Ontario gasoline and help farmers at the same time. We're going to pass a law in Ontario that says by the year 2007, if you're selling gasoline here, 5% of that has



to be ethanol, and by the year 2010, it's going to have to be 10%.

We have a very strong commitment to our natural environment, and it's not purely motivated by self-interest, because after all a clean and safe environment is for the good of our health. But we feel a strong responsibility to generations yet to come, and in that light, when we consider our air, our water and our green space, we are nothing more than temporary trustees, nothing more than interim guardians. We have a heavy responsibility to protect our natural environment for our children and their children and so many generations of Ontarians yet to come.

Let me talk about health care now: public health care, medicare. For us, medicare gives absolutely wonderful expression to this innate Canadian desire to help people when they're sick, not because of how much money they happen to have in their wallet but just because they're sick.

When I was growing up at home with my brothers and sisters, my mum worked as a nurse pretty well throughout. She worked evening shifts and night shifts. I can recall one time she was working in a psychiatric ward in one of the Ottawa hospitals and she had been physically attacked by one of the patients, who, through no fault of his own, was suffering from a mental illness. She came home and I can recall sitting around with my brothers and sisters, and my mother had bruises. So we said to our mother, "Mum, listen, get another job. We don't need this. You don't need this," and she said, "But my patients are counting on me."

Just recently, we've heard of some of our front-line heroes in this battle against SARS, and I've heard of some families who have said to their mothers, "Don't go to work. It's too dangerous. You could get really sick, Mum." But those nurses said, "Our patients need us." Nurses and doctors and other front-line workers don't think of themselves as heroes. If you ask them, they'll tell you they're just doing their job.

We have a job to do when it comes to health care. Just doing our job today in our party means defending and improving medicare. Our plan—we're calling it The Health Care We Need—starts with an enshrined commitment to medicare. We're going to make it the law. We're going to make Ernie Eves's pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care illegal. We're going to shut down his private MRIs and instead we're going to invest in public MRIs. And we're going to bring Ernie Eves's private hospitals into the public system.

We're going to hire 8,000 new nurses in Ontario and we're going to keep them here by giving them the two things they want, need and deserve: respect and full-time work. We won't compare them to Hula Hoop workers and we won't condemn them to part-time and casual work.

1630

I don't know if you know that 50% of Ontario nurses are working part-time, and that is not out of choice; it's because they can't get full-time work. So they're busy

scrambling trying to cobble together a full-time career by taking on two or three jobs at the same time. In this new, frightening world of SARS, we have now come to understand that not only is that not good for nurses who are looking for some stability and predictability in their lives and the continuity that comes with going back to the same patients over and over again, but it is a dangerous thing in an era where we can all contract a virus and take it with us to another hospital setting.

We're also going to increase the number of doctors in Ontario. We're going to train 150 more every single year. We are going to make the practice of family medicine more attractive to doctors and better for families by setting up 150 family health teams right across Ontario. These collaborative teams will be made up of doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists and other health care professionals—people working together and combining their skills to deliver quality accessible health care to Ontarians.

We're going to get serious about illness prevention in Ontario. Doctors are telling us that 25% of our children are overweight. They're also telling us that one half of our children are not active enough to achieve optimal growth. At the elementary school level we are going to ban the sale of junk food and make daily physical mandatory.

I am sad to report that nobody watches more television on the face of the earth than Canadian kids. They are averaging four hours every single day. They're spending 26 hours a week behind a desk during the school year and they're averaging 28 hours in front of a television set. I am not sure, because I don't have the stats yet, as to how much time they are spending in front of a computer. I think that one of the most important things that we can do is impress upon our children in the early years good values when it comes to physical activity and diet, and we intend to do that.

Smoking kills 12,000 Ontarians annually and costs us \$4 billion. The Ontario Medical Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has been asking this government for some time now to ban smoking in public and workplaces. We will do that.

You know, I had the opportunity—the privilege—recently to meet Heather Crowe. Heather Crowe appears on television ads. She comes from the east coast. She started working when she was 17. She has always worked as a waitress. She is 57 now, she is a single mum and she told me she has one year left—she is dying of lung cancer. The remarkable thing is that she's never smoked a single day in her life. We think that we have a responsibility to ensure that when people get up in the morning and go to work to raise their families—whether they are working in a restaurant or a bar as Heather Crowe was, or any other place—they are entitled to a safe, clean and healthy work environment, and we're going to give that to all Ontarians.

The other day when we first came back, last Thursday, and I put some questions to the Premier on the matter of health care, he kept telling me that this government is

spending all kinds of money on health care. Here are the facts: this government cut \$1 billion out of our hospitals; this government shut down 5,700 hospital beds; this government shut down 20 emergency rooms; this government fired 1,000 nurses.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** We're spending \$10 billion more on health care, Dalton.

**Mr McGuinty:** I'll give you this: you did spend \$400 million on severances for firing thousands of nurses.

Today in Ontario—and I'm sure the minister would also be interested in this—we're second from the bottom in Canada. On a per capita basis we have the second-fewest doctors, the second-fewest nurses, the second-fewest hospital beds. When it comes to funding—and I'm sure the minister will be interested in hearing this too—as a percentage of GDP, nobody invests less in health care in Canada except Alberta. Those are the facts, Minister. You may not like them, but those are the facts.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** You said we cut health care, and we didn't cut health care.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Take your seat, please. Order. I don't want to be standing up interrupting the response to the throne speech or the leader of the official opposition, but I'm not going to have this kind of—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Minister. Please continue.

**Mr McGuinty:** The last of our policy platforms has less to do with what we'll do than how we'll do it.

Our plan, called Government That Works for You, addresses a fundamental problem endemic to politics not only in Ontario but right across Canada. People are losing confidence in politicians and in their institutions of government. There's a lot of cynicism out there, and no government has fed that cynicism more than this government. This government has shut people out. It has turned them off with its autocratic style, and I'm talking about everything from its record-breaking number of debate closures to its insulting, offensive and unconstitutional budget infomercial.

We want to do things differently. We're going to make governments more open and more accountable. We're saying to Ontarians, "The government that we want to form will be your government, not our government. We won't shut you out; we'll invite you in and we'll start by respecting your MPP." We're going to encourage members of this Legislature to represent their constituents instead of blindly toeing the party line. I'm talking about free votes on all matters except for platform commitments and matters of confidence.

We're going to have hearings on all major legislation. We're going to give more power to legislative committees. We're going to require that cabinet ministers attend at least two thirds of question period sessions. We're going to do something about the growing, disturbing influence of money in Ontario politics. In consultation with the public, we're going to set strict

limits on the amount of money that political parties can raise and spend.

We're also going to work to raise voter turnout. In the past 30 years, the percentage of eligible Ontarians casting a vote has dropped from more than 70% to just over 50%. That should tell us all something. Some people I know are feeling that their vote just doesn't count. We're going to consult extensively with Ontarians about whether it's time to rethink our first-past-the-post electoral system. We're going to hold a referendum, giving Ontarians a choice to either keep our first-past-the-post system or to exchange it for another.

We're going to hold elections on fixed dates rather than at the whim of the Premier. Just think of it, Speaker: soon we'll be able to put all of this pre-election nonsense behind us. I'm talking about the TV ads, the reckless, irresponsible promises. We're talking about all those things that people are frankly sick and tired of. It's time to put all of that behind us.

It's time for a change in Ontario. This government had a chance with last week's throne speech to show the people of Ontario that it could change. It had a chance to show the people of Ontario that it had a sense of purpose, a sense of direction. Instead, what they showed Ontarians is that after months of dithering the best they could manage was to tinker a little.

**1640**

The government of Ernie Eves is out of steam, out of ideas and out of touch. They're offering nothing more to Ontarians than more of the same. We over here on this side of the House can tell you that Ontarians don't want more of the same. They've had enough of the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves experience; they want a new experience. They don't want Ernie Eves's plan for 1995. We need a plan for 2007 and beyond. We need a new approach for a new world—a world that's post-9/11, post-Enron, post-dot-com bubble burst and even post-SARS.

Only our party offers that new approach. We're proud of our province. We want Ontario to live up to its great potential. We just want the best for Ontarians. We want for them the best public schools, the best public health care. We want a safe and clean environment. We want good, high-paying jobs for all our children. We want that to be found inside a healthy, strong and growing economy. And for all of us, we want a strong and caring society. Our plan for change is just what Ontario needs, and we can't wait to get to work for the people of this province.

I move that the address in reply to the speech of His Honour of the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be amended by striking out all of the words after, "We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario," and substitute the following:

"Whereas Ontarians want a real and positive change;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will fix the vital public services that we all need while keeping the budget in balance and holding the line on taxes;



"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will cancel the \$3.2-billion tax giveaway to large corporations and put that money toward improved health care, with more doctors and nurses and shorter waiting lists;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will cancel the private school tax credit and put that money back into improving our public schools through smaller class sizes;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will end taxpayer-funded self-serving partisan advertising and put that money toward improving our water quality monitoring system and improving our air by closing coal-fired plants and mandating cleaner gasoline;

"Whereas the speech from the throne proved that the Eves government has been dithering, continues to support two-tier health care, private school tax credits, giveaways to large corporations, taxpayer-funded self-serving advertising and compromised environmental protection;

"Therefore, this House profoundly regrets that nothing has changed. The Eves government is tired, cynical, out of touch, out of steam and out of ideas, and instead of providing the real and positive change Ontarians demand, are only looking out for themselves and their friends."

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr McGuinty has moved that the address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of this session be amended by striking out all the words after, "We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario," and substitute the following:

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"Whereas the speech from the throne proved that the Eves government has been dithering, continues to support two-tier health care, private school tax credits, giveaways to large corporations, taxpayer-funded self-serving advertising and compromised environmental protection;

"Therefore, this House profoundly regrets that nothing has changed. The Eves government is tired, cynical, out of touch, out of steam and out of ideas, and instead of providing the real and positive change Ontarians demand, are only looking out for themselves and their friends."

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I move adjournment of the debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** You have read my mind. I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Therefore, this House will now stand adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

*The House adjourned at 1647.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

## ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
2	38	2	38	to tell all the wonderful people who work at

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

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		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 5 May 2003

Lundi 5 mai 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 mai 2003

*The House met at 1845.*

### ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 1, An Act to protect jobs, promote economic growth and to address the challenge of SARS in Ontario / Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à protéger les emplois, à promouvoir la croissance économique et à relever le défi posé par le SRAS en Ontario.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2003, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** The floor is open for debate.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down Mr Hampton's lead till Wednesday. This will just be our first 20-minute spot.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it agreed that the leader of the third party will have his response to the speech from the throne tomorrow; is that correct?

**Mr Bisson:** Wednesday.

**The Acting Speaker:** Wednesday. Is it agreed? Agreed. You have that agreement and you may proceed.

**Mr Bisson:** Thank you very much to the members of the House.

As you know, we came back here after a 138-day hiatus. You remember we were here in December, we were dealing with the business before the House on behalf of Ontarians. When the House rose, if we remember correctly, the government sort of indicated back in December that they were going to come back this spring and they were going to come with a very loaded agenda,

all kinds of initiatives and all kinds of issues to deal with so that the province of Ontario can overcome this difficulty we're having as of late.

We all know—it's unfortunate—that Ontario has been caught up in a bit of a recession. We see what has happened with SARS. That's no fault of the government. That's one of those things that happens; I'm prepared to say that. It has had a huge economic impact on the city of Toronto, and it has had a bit of an impact across the province as well. But particularly for us in northern Ontario, the high Canadian dollar is something most people didn't see coming. As a result, many of the mines and mills of northern Ontario that I can speak of—and I imagine it's the same thing in southwestern Ontario and other parts of the province where we rely on exports to the United States—are being really affected in a negative way. When you're talking about an eight-cent jump back from last December to today, it has quite an impact.

Talking to companies in northern Ontario like Tembec and others, they're saying that if you couple that on top of the softwood lumber issue in regard to the tariff that the Americans have imposed on Canadian softwood lumber, tie on to that an already weak market when it comes to lumber because the United States economy is not moving as well as it should and an increase in the Canadian dollar, it's making things tough.

I was expecting that we would be coming back this spring earlier rather than later. I thought originally we were coming back sometime in March—what was it?

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** March 17.

**Mr Bisson:** It was March 17 that we were supposedly coming back, but on the way to March 17 Ernie Eves, I don't know, decided to do something different. He said, "It's far more important for us as Conservatives and as a government to take a step back, to refocus the agenda of the Conservative government and come back this spring with a more focused agenda when it comes to how we deal with the matters of Ontario in this Legislature, so we can deal with the socio-economic issues that we have to deal with in this great province of ours through this Legislature."

I was expecting that the government was going to have a throne speech that was chock full of new initiatives. I was really looking forward to—not looking forward. I was a bit afraid, quite frankly, because we've seen what the Tories have done over the last eight years and I have some problem with a lot of it, as you well know, along with a majority of Ontarians. But I was expecting far more and I was quite surprised, when the

throne speech was given, that there wasn't more in the way of detail when it came to the kinds of things the government wanted to do. They made some references in the throne speech about, "We're going to do more for health care. We're going to do more for education. We're going to do more for everybody," but it was very short on any kind of detail. So I thought, well, we're going to find out this week, because the government last Thursday, I expected, was going to come into the House and ministers of the crown were going to stand up and read bills that would be debated in this Legislature, and we'd come back this Monday and we would have more bills introduced in the Legislature that deal with the severe economic issues and all of the socio-economic issues that we need to deal with in the province of Ontario.

But look at the order paper. The order paper has almost nothing in it. I am—oh, sorry, Mr Prue. I went and dropped his glasses.

1850

**Mr Prue:** Don't step on those.

**Mr Bisson:** I can't step on them. Give them; I might need them.

When you look at the order paper, it's quite interesting. If you go to where it says "Government business" under the order paper, take a look. There's nothing there. We basically have a special debate on SARS that the government has tabled. We know there's going to be a budget debate, and I'll come back to that a little bit later. Now Mr Klees has introduced a transportation bill which is by and large a housekeeping bill that they brought into the House.

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** You passed the SARS bill.

**Mr Bisson:** We passed SARS fast. We said, "Listen, this is a bill that we can support. This is a bill that's important to the people of Ontario." We agreed with the government. We gave them credit for what they did, which was right. We said, "We support it all the way. It's not a problem." I have no problem as a New Democrat supporting issues that make some sense and where you do a good job. I've always taken that position. But I'm really surprised that we don't see much more in the way of what the government wants to do this spring. So I have to think to myself that it's one of two things: the government doesn't know, which I have to believe is not the case, or they've got another little plan cooking, and the other little plan is called an election. I think the government is getting themselves—

**Hon Mr Clark:** Oh, go on.

**Mr Bisson:** Why? Are you afraid of going into an election? I can't believe that, Brad, a tough guy like you.

**Hon Mr Clark:** Another NDP conspiracy.

**Mr Bisson:** Oh, come on. I've got to believe a big, tough guy—Brad, if you and I met somebody on a corner somewhere at dark, with the size of us two guys, they'd be afraid. I can't believe you're afraid. I can't believe it.

Anyway, I just have to say that I have to believe the other option is that the government is holding back the specifics of what they didn't talk about in the throne

speech to kind of roll them out. You say to yourself, "Why are they wanting to roll them out?" And you say to yourself, "Well, they're rolling them out for a very simple reason: they're setting up the possibility to call an election this spring."

I say to the government across the way, please go for it. Our committee rooms are set. We've called 60% of our polls. We've got lots of sign locations. In fact, we have a volunteers party again this Friday. We have lots of volunteers. We have money. We're doing a good job. We're ready. We're ready to go in Timmins-James Bay. So I'm hoping you call this spring, because as I travel around my riding and around the province—and as a critic you go to different events around the province—people are saying, "So, are they going to call an election? Do we finally get a chance to vote those guys out?" I say, "Well, you know, I can't believe they're going to call, because they're 19 points back. It's kind of hard to call an election when you're 19 points back." Why do I know that? Because I remember 1995; I remember it well. I don't remember how many points, but it was something reminiscent of that.

**Mr Prue:** I remember 1990 too.

**Mr Bisson:** I remember 1990. That's another story. Whoa, that was a wonderful year, yes. We were way back. We were like 30 points back, and we won the government. That was something else.

Anyway, the point is that I have a bit of a hard time believing the government is going to call when they're 19 points back. I think what it is is this: I think they've done some polling, lots of polling. They've looked at the Liberal numbers and they are seeing what we're basically seeing, which is the great big parking lot called the Liberal Party of Ontario, a big parking lot. It's so, so soft on the edges that even though they're showing that they may be at 50% or 51%, whatever it is, the true numbers, if it came down to E-Day—in our language we call it E-Day; it's election day in layman's language—they're going to probably lose about 10% to 15% of that. So I have a funny feeling they're looking at the same numbers we're looking at, and that great big parking lot called the Liberal Party of Ontario is not going to hold at 51%.

But I'm glad for the Liberals, because they really are feeling good these days. They wake up in the morning and they eye the Whitney Block and they eye the Macdonald Block. They're checking out the seats, what a minister would have. They want to go in and look at the rug to see if the rug's in good shape. They're really feeling good these days. That's good; I like that. Keep it up. Be nice and cocky; I love it. This is good.

I remember 1990, when they were over 50 points ahead when they called an election. They were almost 60 points if I'm—who remembers 1990? Was it 60 points?

**Hon Mr Clark:** Sixty.

**Mr Bisson:** It was around 60 points. David Peterson called an election at 60 points in the polls, and Bob Rae won a majority government. Then, I remember 1995, Lyn McLeod was about 56% or 55% when the election was called and Mike Harris came out of third place—rem-



iniscient of what might happen in this election—and led all the way up to the polls in 1995 and won a huge majority government.

I remember in 1999—how far back were you then?

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Eighteen points.

**Mr Bisson:** Was it 18?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bisson:** Really? Well, you're not going to make up those 18 points; we are. How's that? We're not going to let you guys keep up those points. That Liberal parking lot, we all know what it is.

I'll tell you what the issue is going to be in this election. I think a lot of people in this province—and we're starting to hit on it now—are starting to recognize what happens in a society like ours when somebody doesn't believe in government. It's really easy to get up in the morning and say, "I don't want to pay taxes. I think I pay too much, and government is in my way." It's an easy debate, until a loved one gets sick and he or she has to go to the hospital, or you have a child in the primary or secondary school system who's not getting the type of services they need, for example special-needs education, for what is needed to try to compete with other kids; or you're driving on a highway somewhere in northern Ontario and they're not plowing the roads any more the way they used to because they've privatized the roads. All kinds of examples—the list goes on and on: Walkerton and all kinds of things.

The thing is that people are starting to recognize—as much as we like to pick at government and as much we like to, sometimes, say, "Government is not a good thing and it's in our way and get it out of the way"—we start to recognize today just what happens when a government tries to undo government. People are recognizing that if we're going to live in a civil society that provides a basic infrastructure for people so that we can live in civility and with a basic standard of living, a big part of that is government. We need government to put in place labour laws that say that when people go to work in the morning, they've got a chance at making a good living, knowing that the employer can't retaliate against them for whatever reason; that there are good health and safety laws; that we've got a good health care system, if we get sick, that responds to the needs of people; that when our kids go to school in the morning, they've got a chance of getting the best education in the world so they can compete against other kids from other jurisdictions around the world, because, like it or like it not, it's become a much more global environment.

Therefore, I think people are starting to recognize that we need to have, quite frankly, a government that provides those basic infrastructures that we need for the province of Ontario in order to make us the type of province that we are.

I think that's going to be one of the key issues in this upcoming election. That's why, in our particular campaign—I've brought a leaflet with me because I wanted to show it to you, hot off the presses. See, it has

Howard's picture on it—my leader, Howard Hampton—and it says Public Power. You can go to the Web site—anybody out there who's watching—it's public-power.ca—

**Hon Mr Clark:** Is this a paid political announcement?

**Mr Bisson:** Well, you guys have paid political announcements by the bushelful. I listen to those paid political advertisements—and you know what's funny? I digress, but I heard the Liberals get up today and say, "If we're elected government, we're going to do away with all that advertising." Who believes that? I remember David Peterson was a master of advertising. I don't believe you guys are going to do away with it. The only reason you're mad is because you can't do it. That's really what it comes down to.

I just say to people, "Be somewhat careful about that." Is there reform needed when it comes to how we spend money in the province of Ontario when it comes to advertising and other so-called perks that political parties can have? I think there needs to be.

We need to talk about electoral reform; we need to talk about spending limits when it comes to elections; we need to talk about what's appropriate and what's not appropriate for opposition parties or governments, quite frankly, to be doing when it comes to how we spend the public's money.

That's why in our particular platform we have a number of issues that we come through on the Public Power theme. While we're talking Public Power, we're not just talking electricity—and I'll talk about that a little while later—but we're talking about the power of the public, saying to the people, "Your vote is your say. It's your opportunity" in this upcoming election, "either this spring or this fall—whenever you do call it—to go to the ballot box and decide, 'Which direction do I want to take in the province of Ontario? Do I want to take the position that the Tories are taking'"—and I understand where the Tories are going. I can disagree with you on the policy things but I know where you're coming from. You have a particular bent; you don't believe in government the way that I do. You believe in a more market-oriented-type style of running a government, which I believe is not—you know, health care is not a business. Education is not a business; it's a service. It's about providing that basic infrastructure that I talked about earlier. But I understand where you're coming from, and at least I understand it. Is it following the way of the Tories, or is it—as people would say now with the Liberals—going their way, which is, "Today I'm like Ernie Eves and tomorrow I'm like Howard Hampton, and who am I talking to tomorrow?"

1900

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** Never.

**Mr Bisson:** Well, I hear the Liberals saying, "Never." My God, you know, I heard the Liberals complain that the Tories stole ideas from the Liberals and I've just got to say to myself, « Quel culot. » Liberals complaining about stealing ideas? Whoa, man. These guys should

wear a badge of honour. They're Robin Hoods of political history, I'll tell you. They have stolen more ideas from both the left and the right and then somehow or other managed to walk that fence without falling and hurting themselves. I never could figure that one out.

But in this particular election I think that it will come down to that. I think as people look at what the political parties are saying and what they are offering to the public, people will look at the NDP, they will look at the Public Power campaign and they will say, "Yes, we understand where the New Democrats are coming from." I think, as they look at Dalton McGuinty and the platform of the Liberals, that they are going to drop. I don't believe for a second that those 51 points are going to hold; I really believe they are going to drop.

What is it that we are talking about in Public Power? We are talking about a number of things. We're saying to people in the province of Ontario, "Your vote is your say. It's your opportunity in this election to decide what direction you want to take as Ontario citizens when it comes to how Ontario is governed." We believe, for example—we have it in our Public Power campaign—that the minimum wage should be increased. We believe that the minimum wage has been at \$6.85 an hour far too long. We have advocated for a number of years now, since the Tories took power, that we need to increase the minimum wage. Why? Well, the Liberals all of a sudden were opposed and then they were for, but that's another story. The thing is that we believe that hard-working people, far too many of them, are at minimum wage. The service industry and people who work in restaurants etc at minimum wage are having a very difficult time. We think that when you look at the level of the minimum wage in the United States, the least we can do in Canada and in Ontario is to provide a minimum wage at least comparable to what the Americans have. That would bring the minimum wage up to \$7—\$8 an hour; excuse me. Seven dollars would be 15 cents. Get it right: \$8. Get that straight. And then after that, having some sort of mechanism so that minimum wage is able to keep pace with inflation I think is also important.

We believe for example, and I commend the government—one good thing in the throne speech—that people on ODSP should get an increase. That's something my colleague Tony Martin has been pushing for a number of years now, that people on all kinds of disability pensions and people on social assistance are really hard done by when it comes to the amount of money they get every month. I'm glad to see that the tour Tony did when he travelled this province over the last two years, asking people to sign petitions and send in cards etc in order to increase both the ODSP and the social assistance benefits, at least did some good. The government is prepared to increase the ODSP, but that is one of the things we talked about in ours.

We talk about tuition. We say that tuitions in this province have skyrocketed under the Tory governments. We believe there should be an immediate 10% rollback in tuition. We have children in the school system. I think,

Mr Bartolucci, you do as well, in the university or college system, I would think. Yea?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** They're all finished. I have one that is finished and the other one is in her third year.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Just putting away money at this point. You're doing all right. Those of us who are fortunate enough to have children in post-secondary education understand just how expensive that is.

We say it's really important that we provide good day-care for the people of Ontario. We want a model that is a bit of a hybrid between what Quebec and British Columbia have done when it comes to a universal, public daycare system at \$10 a day so that people who need daycare are able to get it at \$10 a day, no matter what their income might be. It should be a universal right.

We believe there should be a reform to the pension system. This is something that is very important: people should have the ability in this modern economy, where we say, "You worked for 10 employers in your lifetime, where before you'd get one job at one employer, you'd work there 30 years and you'd get a pension"—most people out there can't work for one employer for 30 years because those jobs don't exist the way they used to. We believe that you have to go the way of making pensions portable so that workers are able to transfer their pensions from one employer to the other. We believe that people should be vested on day one, upon entering employment, so that they start collecting pension benefits from the first day they start to work, and we believe the pension should be indexed. We say that is such an important thing. I look at the workers in the paper mills in my riding who have a good pension: people at Spruce Falls, people who work at the Smooth Rock Falls Tembec mill are retiring on good pensions, and that is a good thing for those communities.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** What about our pensions?

**Mr Bisson:** We don't have pensions. I'm never voting Conservative again. Cancelled my pension, you did.

**Mr Murdoch:** You voted with us, though, you dummy.

**Mr Bisson:** Oh, I did. Oh, my Lord, I should have had a V-8. Anyway, we believe that's the case.

Last, but not least, we believe that hydro has to remain under public control. We have to undo much of the damage that the Tories have done to hydro.

I just want to give a couple of quick examples. I've got a particular business in my riding that, in February, 2002, had a \$1,389 energy bill. When you add the GST that they had to pay on to it, the total bill was \$1,500. This year, just in energy charges, their bill is \$2,298. Add the user fees on top of that—cost of delivery to you, retirement of the public debt and all those other things that are on the hydro bill. The government says they capped the bill. Oh, really. When you add all that up, it's \$2,200 plus \$1,500 for a total of \$3,800. There are hard-working business people in my riding that are seeing that



their hydro bills have doubled since the market's been open. We believe that we need to have a utility company in this province that is publicly run, that is there to deliver power at cost and is there in order to make sure that small business people in this province, consumers at home or large industries such as Kidd Creek and others across this province, are able to rely on safe, cheap, affordable hydro so that they are able to run their plants.

I have another case with a Mr Bergeron, who has gotten a hydro bill—I couldn't believe his. I've got 30 seconds left. He went from a bill of \$240 last year for February to \$672. This is a senior on a pension. I say this is a really, really bad thing. The government says that it wants to do something for seniors? Put hydro back into public control and undo the damage you've done to hydro. For Mr Bergeron, that's almost a tripling of his hydro bill, something he can ill afford to deal with.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity. I wish I could do it all over again. I move unanimous consent that I do another 20 minutes.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'll take that as a rhetorical motion and declare that the floor is now open for up to two minutes for questions or comments.

**Hon Mr Clark:** I want to thank the member for Timmins-James Bay for his comments. As he was speaking—and I was listening very closely to him because he was raising some interesting things—he talked about the Liberal lead in the polls. It goes all the way back to 1975. They've been ahead every single election in the polls back to 1975 and have blown it. It's always been hollow. One of the things that they forget—they pounce on the polling numbers, but they forget that there's a large undecided factor still. You and I know that it still exists. People haven't seen all the platforms yet; they can't judge.

But I have been watching the platforms. I've been watching the Liberal platform. I was amazed, and this is interesting: they've actually included in their platform now free votes. The Liberals are going to include free votes. This might come as a bit of a surprise. They might have wanted to do it this past four years, when we actually did free votes on this side of the House. I remember the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Hamilton East voting against amalgamation.

#### *Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** Oh, they're getting loud now. They supported amalgamation, but the members for Hamilton Mountain and Hamilton East voted against it because the Leader of the Opposition told them to do that. That's what happened. Ian Urquhart wrote a great column about it—fascinating. They voted against back-to-work legislation for the elementary panel in Hamilton. Their constituents wanted the kids back in school, but the members for Hamilton Mountain and Hamilton East voted against their constituents, voted against the community and voted with the Liberal Party. So much for free votes.

Let's not forget the Safe Schools Act. What person in this Legislature wouldn't be about safe schools? Yet they

voted against it. Then, lo and behold, an election comes and now they're talking about safe schools. Talk about spirited movement of ideas from one platform to another. I think they should be looking in the mirror when they make accusations about documentation being moved from one party to another.

I am awaiting this election campaign. It's going to be fascinating.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I'm delighted to have an opportunity to make some comments with regard to the remarks that have been made this evening by the member from Timmins-James Bay.

I cannot help but be very amused that, on an evening when we are to be debating the content of the throne speech, there has been, in my opinion, a significant amount of time devoted to the Liberal democratic charter. I think it's a document that's very worthy of some attention and some debate.

There was reference made to our position with regard to the use of government dollars for advertising, and the suggestion that this is just what the Liberals are going to say to get elected. If the member would pay very close attention to what my leader says, what we are going to do when we are government is to introduce legislation that will ensure that any spending of government money on advertising will come under the scrutiny of the Integrity Commissioner. It's simply not going to be the case where we can say we will do something and then decide to change our mind later on. In fact, we're going to introduce legislation and it will be the Integrity Commissioner who will be the arbiter as to whether or not we are following through on our promise.

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We talk about electoral reform and free votes in the House, and that is something we are committed to.

I also heard the member make reference to the promise that we will reduce spending limits; in other words, the amount of money political parties will be able to raise and the amount of money they will be able to spend during an election campaign. This is what we have heard from the people of Ontario that they believe is needed to ensure the electoral process is as fair, balanced and democratic as possible. My leader, Dalton McGuinty, has had the courage to put it in writing and say this is what we will do when we are government—the sooner, the better.

**Mr Prue:** We have a rowdy group here tonight.

It is, as always, a pleasure to be back in this House. I have to tell you that when March 17 came and went and we did not come back, there was probably no one more disappointed than me, being a rookie—only Mr McDonald on the other side has been here a shorter time than I—and perhaps many thousands of people who love to tune this in in the evening. There were at least two very disappointed people who would have liked to spend a lot more time here.

Then we came and we watched what can only be described as a disastrous budget that took place somewhere in Brampton. What can I say? The newspapers panned it;

the editorial comments, 51 out of 52 daily newspapers, were absolutely negative. The *Globe and Mail*, Canada's long-established newspaper, ran 17 editorials in a row against what was happening by the members on that side of the House. The whole thing came down to that they wanted to discuss this with the people, that they wanted to send out questionnaires. I don't know how many they sent out—certainly a lot of them, and about 10,000 came back. I don't know where those 10,000 live, but I want to tell you there weren't very many from Beaches-East York. In fact, I don't know of a single soul, although there may have been someone, who contacted my office and told me that they were going to participate in the throne speech.

And what did we see in that throne speech? Quite frankly, it is an absolute disappointment to those of us who have had a chance to read it. In fact, there is nothing in there about daycare; there is nothing in there about transferable pensions; there's nothing in there about holding on to Hydro; there is nothing in there about disabilities, save and except that they're going to do some small improvements; there's nothing in there about selling assets as was contained in the budget; there is nothing in there for housing and for all of those people in Ontario who are desperate; there is nothing in there for cities. I think it was a throne speech devoid of content.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** I wanted to rise and thank the member for Timmins-James Bay for all of the comments that he has put here on the record. I should, I guess, say that I don't agree with them all, but I am glad he makes them. By the way, I'll be speaking a little later, so you may want to think of this as a commercial for "Hear Bert speak later on."

My comment to the member for Timmins-James Bay is that although Ontario has a lot of needs and wants right now, he should read the throne speech again. He'll find that, unlike the start of his speech, where he was talking about the long layoff, he must know that he forgot about the layoff in 1995. As a matter of fact, it reminds me: I sent one of my staff down to the library to get me the budget for 1995, because I had somebody who asked, "Bert, do you really think the budget speech should have been outside of the House?" I said, "By all means. I think it's a bold, innovative idea and I'm glad we're doing it. I'd like to reflect on it and I may not agree with doing it again, but I think that it was a good idea." Lo and behold, the staff member I sent down for the 1995 budget came back, and I said, "Where is it?" She said, "We can't find it." I guess my complaint, if you like, right now with the member for Timmins-James Bay—I know you'll take it to your caucus and your buddies over in the Liberal seats. Get me a copy of their 1995 budget, please.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Timmins-James Bay now has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr Bisson:** He says they're my buddies. Oh, God, it's tough to take. I want to choose my friends, Bert. Let me choose them myself. No, they're all honourable members. We have a bit of fun in here sometimes.

I say to my good friend Mr Johnson, you wanted me to read the throne speech. I'm not an insomniac. If I were, I would read it. It would put me to sleep pretty quick. It was hard enough to follow through the day of the actual throne speech.

Both the Deputy Speaker and Mr Prue from Beaches-East York raised the issue of the budget, a very important point. I thought it was rather interesting that a government member, even after that fiasco happened, would get up and say, "That wasn't a bad idea. It was innovative." You know what? The thing that people look for in good politicians is when you admit that you're wrong.

Admit on that one you were wrong. You took a calculated risk that politically it would be a good thing for you to do the budget outside, at the Magna plant. It turned out, as I expected, that the public didn't like it. They thought it was an affront to democracy, not only to this chamber but to the people of Ontario who vote for us. Admit you were wrong. Move past it. It was an error. Don't do it again.

My good friends of the Liberal caucus, it's so much fun being with you. One day I come into the Legislature and I listen to one thing that's said, and then I hear a completely different discussion a couple of days later inside this House about the leadership of Dalton McGuinty. I remember in 1994 Mr Dalton McGuinty, who now purports to be the friend of teachers, introduced a bill in this House that would have taken away their right to strike. So here he is, complaining about the Tories rumoured to be introducing such legislation and how bad a thing it is. But I've got the bill in my constituency office. I've got it ready for the campaign; it's in my briefing book. Any time somebody raises that, I want to raise the Dalton McGuinty private member's bill, which does exactly what the Tories said they would do when it comes to banning strikes by teachers. So I'm not taking any lesson from the Liberals.

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for further debate. The Chair will recognize the member for Kitchener Centre.

*Applause.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I appreciate that applause from my colleagues. You can stop now.

It's really interesting. I heard the Leader of the Opposition speaking this afternoon and I immediately prepared notes. I have enough to go for three hours tonight but the Clerk's table told me I only have 20 minutes.

I do want to point out, to start with, that Ian Urquhart on March 31 in the *Toronto Star* wrote, and I'm going to quote a couple of lines: "Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty has promised that, if he becomes Premier"—which won't happen, by the way—"his government will spend more on health, education, the environment, cities, police, culture, agriculture, skills training and the north.

"How much more?" Well, Ian says, "About \$7.4 billion a year, according to the Liberals' ... calculations."

He says, "Let's accept for a moment that the Liberals' figure is correct." The Liberal leader "is often asked this question and he has a quick and ready answer" how he



would pay for it all. "He would roll back the \$2.2-billion corporate tax cuts contained in the 2001 budget."

Well, guess what? That was then, only a month and a half ago, and lo and behold, today, with a quick stroke of the pen, Dalton McGuinty in his speech increased that figure to \$3.2 billion. Now, that's Liberal math. Then he says that McGuinty would "cancel income and property tax cuts from the same budget that have not yet been implemented." He would "repeal the private school tax credit and reduce spending on consultants and government advertising," a total of \$4.75 billion. Whoops. There's a shortfall here. There's a shortfall of \$3.5 billion, and that's using the Liberals' own low figure of \$7.4 billion a year in their spending plans.

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"He is also counting on"—get this—"an additional \$3.3 billion from Ottawa in transfers for health and skills training." Well, guess what? That's already been provided for in the budget this year. You can't spend it again, and Ian Urquhart mentioned that.

Now, he also says—

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** He's on to them.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** He is. There's no doubt, I say to the member from Durham. There's no doubt about it.

He says all of his revenue figures are for the fourth and final year of a government mandate. That's allowing for all the projections, so that would be the maximum figure of these tax credits at that time, not next year or the year after, which would be considerably lower.

I do want to say—

**The Acting Speaker:** Will the member take his seat, please. The member for Sarnia-Lambton, on a point of order.

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the debate tonight is on the throne speech. I have been listening carefully. I believe that the member is not staying on topic, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. I would just point out that it is a throne speech debate and, much like budget debates and supply, there's a greater latitude provided on these. I will watch carefully if the member gets too far afield, although I have to say to you, when we're dealing with a throne speech, there really isn't too much, at the end of the day, that one couldn't argue is encompassed. With that, I will return the floor to the member for Kitchener Centre.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Speaker, would it be possible that I have a minute of my time back? No, it's not possible? I would suggest to you, Speaker, that the member opposite from Sarnia-Lambton has probably been drinking too much Port Huron water, because in four years, she should have known that there is a fair degree of latitude when we're dealing with throne speech debates.

Everything I've been talking about is leading up to what Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader, said this afternoon. Not only that, but I want to go a little step further here. I'm now going to quote from Carol Goar of the Toronto Star, also from March 31. She said that the Liberals came around to the view last week, relating to

private facilities and OHIP—"The Liberals came around to that view more recently. Last week, McGuinty declared his opposition to private clinics. Until then, he had said that such facilities were acceptable," and then all he said was, "provided no one could buy his or her way to the front of the line." Of course, he repeated that line today, in his response to the throne speech. I want to say that that is exactly the position this government has taken, that any private facilities would have to bill OHIP—it would not be paid for by the patient—and nobody could queue-jump. That is the position that our government has taken. So you talk about stealing ideas. That party over there is stealing our ideas. You haven't had an original idea in your life.

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture):** Dalton still wants to close hospitals.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes. Dalton still wants to close hospitals; that's right. I say to the Chair of Management Board, your hospital will be gone, under a Liberal government.

He also said he is going to close all private clinics. What is the most successful private clinic in Canada, maybe in all of North America, today, outside of the Mayo Clinic? That would be the Shouldice Clinic. Dalton McGuinty gets the power? Closed. No more Shouldice.

**Hon Mr Clark:** Say it isn't so.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I can't say it isn't so. He said he's going to close them. He said it right here. This is the Instant Hansard from this afternoon and Dalton McGuinty said that this afternoon.

He said his plan is to keep taxes down; he said that this afternoon. How, I say to you, are you going to keep taxes down with what he has said today? He's going to increase spending by \$13 billion but he is not going to cut any taxes. We showed in the last eight years that we could cut taxes by \$16.1 billion and produce more revenue. Guess what: \$16.1 billion more revenue. But they said they're not going to cut taxes. In fact, they're going to reverse some of the taxes that we've already said we're going to put in, ie, the seniors' property tax credit.

I've got news for you, ladies and gentlemen. The seniors in my riding think this is the most fantastic idea. They've been telling me for eight years that they want this. The Liberals are opposing it. I think they're nuts, personally. I absolutely think that they've lost it.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** What does CARP say?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Actually—it's over 50 now—they are in favour of it. It was in the most recent magazine. Do you not read it? I know why you don't read it: because you're not over 50. Well, I am. Do you know something? The seniors in my riding come in and talk to me—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you. I'm getting close to 60—too close. But I say, this is what they want.

**Mr O'Toole:** You'll soon be eligible.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, I will, as a matter of fact.

Anyway, they talk about this "\$3.2-billion tax cut" that the government has promised large corporations.

We've also promised tax cuts to small corporations. Small corporations are responsible for more than 60% of the job growth in Ontario in the last five years and they're going to get a tax cut so that they can invest more money and create more jobs. That is what this whole tax cut idea is all about—creating jobs.

I know that the NDP is going to have trouble with it and certainly the Liberals aren't going to have a whole lot better idea about it, but here's what it is. We have created an environment in which private industry has created over 1.1 million jobs since 1995.

*Applause.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, that does deserve applause. Government didn't create those 1.1 million jobs. Government didn't create them. It is up to government to create the environment or the climate by which private industry can provide those jobs.

The member for St Catharines came in and he said yes. There you go.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** No, I said "jobettes."

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, well, those are starters.

I have to laugh when the Liberals say that they're going to balance their budget.

**Mr Bradley:** What did your executive assistant say is what I want to know.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** My executive assistant is fired. I really find this tough to take. I'm afraid there are people at home doing what somebody who just handed me this note said. The score is Ottawa 2, Philadelphia nothing. Those who are watching the legislative channel tonight, I can assure you that we will give you updates on a regular basis.

**Mr Bradley:** They have you on the split screen.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, they have this on the split screen. We do have fun in this place.

I was going through Dalton McGuinty's speech again and he says here, "... it just doesn't make any sense, not today, to invite highly skilled and educated people from distant parts of the world to come and move to Ontario and to bring their families here." I'm not trying to take him out of context. He's talking about skills. I want him to know that I agree with him to a point, to a very limited point; that is, in Ontario, unlike Quebec, we do not control our immigration. I also think that we should be attracting more and more of those highly skilled and highly educated people from other countries.

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In my community, my riding of Kitchener Centre, we have a very large number of these highly skilled and highly educated immigrants who have come to Kitchener in the course of the last five to eight years. In fact, we are the fourth largest in terms of number of immigrants in the last five years of any community in Canada. We trail only Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver, and sometimes we trail Montreal because Ottawa and Montreal shift back and forth as to the numbers of immigrants they receive. They are responsible in large part for the tremendous economic growth enjoyed by Kitchener Centre, and

Kitchener Centre, in case any of you don't realize—I hope you do, because I've told you often enough—is one of the most important economic regions of this entire country.

**Mr O'Toole:** Next to Oshawa.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** No, even ahead of Oshawa.

I think it's really important to point out that, yes, we do believe that we have to do more for skills. In fact, that was in the throne speech. It was in the budget. We have talked about skills over and over, over the last few years.

I worked personally on a report for the Honourable Dianne Cunningham with John Tibbits, who is the president of Conestoga College in Kitchener. I worked with him on the applied degrees program. It was through his great effort that we got the applied degrees. I then worked with him to a very great extent to get the colleges of increased technology and advanced learning. I worked with him on that. We brought them in and Conestoga College was one of the beneficiaries, as its students will ultimately be the chief beneficiaries. That's what this was all about. We believe that the increased skills are very important for the economic prosperity of the students, of the province and of the country.

Now suddenly the Liberals are on the bandwagon. Where were they before? Talk about stealing ideas.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** Back in the trail dust.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, we would—I say to the Chair of Management Board, yes, they are back in the trail dust.

Dalton McGuinty today said, "I can tell you, those truly successful, highly competitive economies are those where they have established a strong partnership with labour, government and business pulling together."

He also said, tying in with this, that we trail—and I say in big question marks, trail?—a number of the jurisdictions in the United States. I've got news for you people. We lead and have led for at least five years every jurisdiction in the G7 in GDP. How the heck do the Liberals come off—I tell you guys, you've got to get new writers, because you don't do very good research.

They talk about—get this. The Liberals say, "We have also learned that in our smaller schools in rural and northern Ontario, they tend to have a higher school spirit." Well, do you know what? That's since Bill 160. Do you know what, Speaker? Since Bill 160, we have been able to pour more money per student into the education system of the boards in the north. Before that, many of those boards were getting less than \$3,000 or just over \$3,000 per student, compared to Toronto where they were getting \$10,000-plus per student. The boards in the north had 20- and 30-year-old textbooks held together with Scotch tape and elastic, and I'm not telling you anything that isn't already in Hansard from the testimony given by the presenters to Bill 160 in those northern hearings. I was on those hearings that went right around the province. We heard that everywhere except in Ottawa and Toronto. Then the Liberals have the nerve to come along and say, "Oh, there are so many schools that are short textbooks." We have poured more and more money



into education. Look at this. In the budget this year, since—

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** What does Rozanski say?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Oh, you want to talk about Rozanski? Rozanski has said that we are doing everything that he has recommended. He agrees with what we have done in our education policies. Read his report. I know the Liberals can't read.

From 1998-99 to the present, we've increased spending in education by almost 15%. Between now and 2005-06, we'll increase it by another 14%.

The key here: there is some money in the education system that is not going to the students, that is not going to textbooks, that is not going to special ed, that is not going to those areas where we'd like to see it go. But as a result of the agreements the teachers' unions have had with the government for a number of years, \$306 million this year will go to the teachers' pension plan—\$306 million.

**Mr O'Toole:** That's down considerably.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That is down considerably, yes, but it's \$306 million this year to the teachers' pension plan. That's the same pension plan that bought the Toronto Maple Leafs, that bought the Toronto Raptors. Need I go on?

The Liberal leader also said today that our government has cut health care. I am so fed up with the rhetoric and the hyperbole—and outside of this House I would call it something else, but I know I'm not allowed to accuse him of lying.

Since 1998, the fiscal year 1998-99, in the health care envelope, we've increased funding for hospitals alone from \$6.8 billion a year to \$10.9 billion a year. To that party opposite, which claimed in 1995 that they would keep the health care envelope at \$17.4 billion, we have increased health care funding from \$17.4 billion in 1995 to \$27.7 billion in this fiscal year. That's a \$10-billion increase.

**Interjection:** Is that a cut?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That doesn't sound like a cut to me.

**Mr O'Toole:** Where do they get this cut thing? I think it's their federal cousins—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'm getting to that. I thank you, the member for Durham. The federal government gives us not one cent toward home care, not one cent toward long-term care, not one cent toward pharmaceutical care. They had an agreement, when medicare came into being in this country, that they would fund 50% of all health care costs across this country. This year, in spite of their one-time payment, in spite of that, they are contributing only 17 cents on the dollar; 17% of Ontario's health care is being funded by the federal government. So I say to you people, the Liberals, go talk to your federal cousins in Ottawa.

**The Acting Speaker:** Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

**Mr Bradley:** I am rising to express sympathy with the member for Kitchener Centre, because I was reading the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, and it says a fellow by the

name of Dave Maxwell, Mr Wettlaufer's executive assistant since 1995, "said yesterday he was fired after announcing his decision to try to unseat his boss at a February 25 nomination meeting." Imagine the impertinence of an individual trying to do that.

It says, "Maxwell, the campaign manager who helped Wettlaufer win elections in 1995 and 1999, said he decided to run after watching the MPP's numerous political blunders and 'weak performance' in recent years." That is really dirty, for a person who has actually worked for a person to come out and say that about him.

Then it says that Mr Maxwell "appreciates he's 'committing political suicide' but intends to run even if only to give party members a better appreciation of what has been happening in Wettlaufer's office, and to ask questions."

He goes on to say—

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for St Catharines, take your seat. Chair of Management Board.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This has nothing to do with the throne speech, absolutely nothing.

**The Acting Speaker:** Well, I allowed a great deal of latitude—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Just a minute, Minister. Hang on. I gave a lot of latitude for your own backbencher when a point of order was raised by a Liberal member. I'm going to give the same latitude now. I will listen carefully. If I think he goes way over the line, then I will rein him in, but for now I'm going to allow the speech to continue.

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**Mr Bradley:** He went on to say, "He's become a government apologist instead of a riding representative. It's not his job as MPP to go to Queen's Park, be told what to do and then ram it down peoples' throats."

All I'm doing is expressing sympathy for a person who—you've hired this person, you've given him an opportunity to work for you for the number of years that you have, and he turns around and turns on the member and tries to accuse you of being a government apologist. Surely anybody who listened to your speech this evening could not define you as being a government apologist.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further questions or comments.

**Mr Prue:** Everybody seems to be quoting newspapers today, so I think I cannot be any different. I listened about Ian Urquhart's column attacking the Liberals. I've listened about Carol Goar's column attacking I guess again the Liberals. I've listened to the K-W Record attacking the Conservatives. But I want to tell you, although I seldom read the little paper that grew in Toronto, I really did like the May 2 editorial in the Toronto Sun. I would like to read this for those watching TV and for the members opposite, because I think it says it all. It's called "Selective Cuts Make No Sense."

"In the 1999 election, the Ontario Tories promised 'We'll cut the provincial portion of residential property taxes by 20%, phased in over our next term.'

"It's right there on page 11 of their 'Blueprint' election document, the successor to their 1995 Common Sense Revolution.

"They promised this would provide 'relief to every homeowner and renter in Ontario' since they'd require apartment owners to pass along the savings to tenants through lower rents.

"Of course, that was then and this is now."

Then I'll skip down, because I've only got a minute left. It says:

"The Tories argue seniors have paid into the education system all their lives and, especially since they no longer have children in the system, deserve a special break. Fine. Many younger taxpayers have no kids in the system, either, and use far less health care than seniors. Using Tory logic, where's their special tax break?"

"The Tories have made a bad idea even worse by not setting a cap on the value of a property to which this tax break applies. While the average senior will get \$475, those with homes valued at, say, \$5 million, will get about \$20,000. At least the Tories should cap the value of a home to which the break applies at around \$300,000.

"But that would simply be mitigating the damage caused by one targeted tax by targeting it even more. Instead, we believe the Tories should do what they said they would do in 1999. As we recall, that was one of the principles of the CSR."

**Mr O'Toole:** I'm pleased to respond to the member from Kitchener Centre, who has quite emotionally put his comments on the record. I note today he listened to Dalton McGuinty. He didn't hear much, but he certainly was here to listen. Of course, there wasn't much being said.

When it comes down to talking about the throne speech, I know I had four constituents here that day. Respectfully, they were invited not essentially by me; they were invited because they are important persons who are retired Legion members and persons who have served our country. They were invited by, I guess, the Premier's office; I'm not really sure. But I should put on the record that in my riding they are highly respected people: Jean Blair, Madge Cadan, Don Kerr and Bev Oda. All of these people made comments—not to me directly, but I'm able to take them out of the press.

Don Kerr said that he was pleased to learn of Ontario's support for the Juno Beach memorial to all World War II veterans. He also was very supportive of the recognition of health care workers who had served courageously in the SARS emergency.

Bev Oda said she feels the throne speech successfully focused on taking care of today while building for tomorrow. Our initiatives for seniors were among the things she considered to be the most important. She also noted that our proposal for free tuition for doctors and nurses who agreed to work in underserved areas would go on to help our community in the riding of Durham.

The feedback I hear from my constituents, as I hear from Mr Wettlaufer today, is that the throne speech had a

lot of initiatives, but I was impressed with just three simple things that people should listen to:

Seniors now will have the choice, for their own future, of when to retire. That's empowerment.

Increased payments for persons on disability: we heard that in the pre-budget consultations. Our minister and Premier have acted.

Also, just for our children, the threat of an impaired driver—drunk driving.

There are three examples of what this throne speech delivered to the people of Ontario.

**Ms Di Cocco:** I would suggest that the member from Kitchener Centre read what's called Closing the Prosperity Gap. It's from the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. The reason I suggest that it may be useful for him to read it is because it talks about the prosperity gap that's growing in Ontario. "This trend is worrisome. If we continue on the same path, we are likely to fall further behind."

What this study did, by the way—and I would suggest that it really is good if members read things other than what is put in front of them in a partisan way, because it does help to give an objective perspective on what it is we're talking about—they took 16 peer groups, meaning other jurisdictions of equal size and with about the same GDP. At this point in time, Ontario ranks 14th out of 16 in its peer groups. These are states such as Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, California, Illinois, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and then there's Ontario. We're 14 out of 16 they studied, and why is that? It says that, "In carrying out our mandate 'to measure Ontario's productivity, competitiveness, and economic progress compared to other provinces and US states,' the task force has conducted intensive analyses to develop new insights into" explaining the difference in performances.

I would suggest that what they're saying is that our productivity gap is lagging behind these other jurisdictions because the Conservatives don't understand anything except tax cuts.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Kitchener Centre now has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Contrary to listening to the odd individual or the odd group who are going to publish or say something that is different than what any government or any party would advocate at any one given time, I would rather listen to groups like the chambers of commerce, the Ontario Hospital Association, the doctors in my riding who claim that our health care is so much better in my riding now than it was 10 years ago after the debacle that was caused by the Liberals and the NDP. I would rather listen to the people in my riding who say that health care is so much better, where now almost 90% of the people are happy and satisfied with the treatment they get in the hospitals. I would rather say to those people that yes, we are going to maintain that.

We have this great economy in this province, which we didn't have, I will remind the people of Ontario and I will remind the members opposite, when we were elected



in 1995. I will remind you that we had a homegrown recession in this country. It was homegrown largely because of the policies of the two governments prior to 1995 who believed in spending, who believed in higher taxes, who believed in higher deficits. You discouraged investment. You discouraged job creation. There were no jobs. There was no hope. There was no opportunity for young people. My daughter was one of those who graduated from the University of Western Ontario with high marks and couldn't get a full-time job because of the debacle your governments created.

Don't you sit in this House and pontificate and lecture to us. We know what we are doing. We've got a proper platform, we've got a proper plan for the future, and I'll tell you something: we're going to carry it out after the election.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Take a seat, please. When the government benches are done, we'll move on.

They seem to be done. The floor is open for further debate.

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**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** Mr Speaker, I welcome you and all the members back in the House after a long while, back to debate those issues that we and the people of Ontario find of interest. This is the place where I believe we should be debating those.

Before I do that, we are coming from a very difficult period with the war and then the unexpected SARS effect here. Before I go back into the debate tonight, which is the throne speech, I would like to say thank you to all the staff and the physicians at the Humber River Regional Hospital. That is the major hospital in my area in connection with Humber Memorial, which is another branch of the Humber River Regional Hospital and the Northwestern Hospital as well. It's serving an extremely large community. I would like to say that now that the threat of SARS is finally subsiding, following an extremely difficult and alarming period, I want to express my sincere thanks and admiration to all at Humber River Regional Hospital who have been dealing with the pressures brought on by this viral outbreak. The residents of York West, all of Toronto, as well as the greater Toronto area join me in acknowledging your courageous strength, compassion, professionalism and devotion to your patients. Faced with the overwhelming challenge of providing front-line care at a time of uncertainty and under tough circumstances, you put your own health and safety on the line through the long days and nights. Each and every one of you is a real hero, and we owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude. All the people in our community thank you for protecting our health and safety each and every day. We are grateful that you do it with such courage and conviction.

I will be sending this to all the doctors and physicians at the Humber River Regional Hospital, which I believe was absolutely tremendous in providing not only care but in appeasing a lot of the community which at this

particular time was under very difficult stress and distress as well.

Now if I may delve into the debate of the speech from the throne: in doing that, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member from Sarnia-Lambton for whatever middle time we have left.

Let me address briefly the content—

**Hon Mr Clark:** It's 10 minutes.

**Mr Sergio:** Well, 10 minutes. What can you do in 10 minutes? We have had the budget presentation. Unfortunately, it was not in this place here. We have had the throne speech in the last couple of days, and I believe we are going to have an election in Ontario. I wish we knew when the election would be held—I think that not only the members would be preparing themselves but I believe we owe it to the public that indeed they would know when an election is going to be held. This belongs to the decision of the Premier, Mr Eves. Yes, indeed, I think it's fair that we can look at an election. When? We'll wait, but I can tell that an election is coming. The people out there, they can't wait, because they are saying, "When are we going to have an election?" Well, we are waiting; they are waiting.

I think that we are going into an election, and what are we going into an election for? What will the people look for during an election? Exactly the types of things that we are debating here tonight and tomorrow and perhaps next week, unless the Premier decides to say, "That's it. I've had enough. Let's go to the people."

It will be a time when the people will say, "We are going to look at the government, look at their budget, look at the speech from the throne and look at their record, and"—if you will, let me throw in there—"we are going to look at the leadership of the existing government." I think they are all excellent topics at which the public in Ontario should be looking in the next election and decide—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm going to ask the government benches to please come to order, but I will note that there is a member of the official opposition among them helping to make the noise, so please keep it down. I know you want to be respectful.

Sorry for the interruption. Please continue.

**Mr Sergio:** I'm not going to hold the members of the government—I have lost six seconds because of your attention, Mr Speaker.

As I was saying, it is a good time to go to the electorate because they will be basing their vote at election time on the issues that we are indeed debating today: the speech from the throne, the budget, the leadership and the record of this government for the last eight years. I'll tell you, if in other areas of the province the mood of the people is the same as in my area, what I hear on a daily basis, it is time for change. We have had enough of eight years of this government. They continue to bash the people of Ontario, especially the weakest groups.

Therefore, they say, "You know what? I think it's time for change." We couldn't agree more.

We have said to the Premier, we have said to the government, "You have shown in the last number of years an inconsistency of government, an indisposition toward the people, neglecting the most needy groups." They call them special groups, if, for example, you want to say that our seniors in need of assistance are called a special group.

So people are saying, "We have had enough of bashing," from health care to education, to the environment and a number of other issues. They say, "They have gone too far. We need a change."

Who can disagree with the people of Ontario when no longer are the elected members saying, "I can win or I can lose" or what or where and when? The people of Ontario are saying it is time for change, and for good reason.

We had a speech from the throne, we had a budget. What good was it to the people of Ontario when issues announced and re-announced from back in 1995 are still being re-announced today? This is the government that says, "We have kept our promises." I'll tell you, the people of Ontario can't wait to tell the Premier and this government that they did not keep their promises on the major issues, mainly health care, education and the environment.

So indeed, if they would like to call an election, those will be the issues. The people of Ontario will look at the government, at the members on that side and say they should or they shouldn't. But I can tell you that the mood out there is just for change when they say, "Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals were the first ones to announce their policies, and you know what? You guys make sense. You have a good bunch of positive ideas." Only the Liberals and Dalton McGuinty can bring about those changes.

So let's have that change and let's have the Liberals. Let's give Dalton McGuinty an opportunity to give the people of Ontario what they would expect from their own government. It isn't much that they would expect from their government. It is sensible ideas and positive solutions to deal with those issues in this House and out of this House.

So for me to say today I am happy with the content of the budget and the speech from the throne, I would say let's go and ask the people of Ontario.

I thank you for your time, Mr Speaker.

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**Ms Di Cocco:** The throne speech, as we know, lays out the priorities and direction of where the government wants to go. I have to tell you that it was with a sigh of relief that I, as a democratically elected member of this House, was allowed to come back here to take my seat and listen to this throne speech, something that I was not allowed to do because of the contempt to our parliamentary democracy shown by Premier Eves when he held the budget speech and they read it outside of this Legislature. All of the members in this House are elected

representatives; we are the people's representatives. Our place is here when it comes to the notion of the spending of the people's money, and that's what a budget speech lays out. Unfortunately, I was absolutely shocked that a democratically elected government would actually pull a stunt such as what happened in March.

I encourage all of the people who are watching to take time and read the throne speech carefully, to go through it. The throne speech is, of course, full of accolades of all the wonderful things that have been done and that they plan to do. It sort of lays out this sense of, "We can do no wrong. We've done no wrong. Everything is perfect. Look how wonderful we are." That's basically what the throne speech does in this instant.

There are some reality checks that I would like to bring to this discussion today. When I found out that the throne speech had a consultative process, I sent on behalf of my constituents a couple of proposals, if you want to call it that, to the government prior to the throne speech.

First, and this has to do with our community health care centre in Sarnia, we have 10,000 families in Sarnia that do not have doctors, and 600 seniors who don't have a doctor. So I sent off a letter to Minister Clement, as well as to the Premier, saying that the government has spent millions of dollars asking for input for the throne speech, because all of those pamphlets that are mailed out cost money to print and to send out. They are saying that they wanted input, yet the proposal for a community health centre, a proposal from the Sarnia-Lambton Community Health Centre Steering Committee, signed by over 11,000 Sarnia-Lambton residents, supported by business, by various levels of local governments, by both Conservatives, Liberals and the NDP, and that is critically needed in an area that has a dramatic doctor shortage, has been discontinued and has been scrapped. They were just told a month ago this is a no-go. I don't understand what kind of consultation they're asking for in regard to the throne speech when in fact this proposal to really deal with a serious issue was totally disregarded and dismissed.

There's another area that I would like to give a reality check on, and again it has to do with throne speech consultation. It's about the St Clair Child and Youth Services in our area, and it deals with children's mental health. Children's mental health services were promised \$50 million that was going to go into this area of mental health. They were told it was going to be in the budget, and yet the budget came and went in Brampton: nothing in the budget speech.

I will read something that, again, was written to Premier Eves prior to the throne speech, hoping that it would trigger a little bit of conscience. It says, "For many years, children's mental health services have managed ... real and effective budget reductions through a variety of strategies. These have included attrition of some positions, restructuring the agency (twice) to reduce the number of management positions, and slippage (delaying filling of vacant positions....) Under the government's dictum to 'do more (or the same) with less,' we have



maintained service targets ... although clearly, with fewer staff members, each child, on average, is receiving less service....

"Our provincial association, Children's Mental Health Ontario, has been lobbying government for the past year or two around a proposal to provide revitalization funding on the order of \$50 million to address the issues identified above."

These are really critical areas. These are children in my area who are most at risk. It says here that with the support of two successful Ministers of Community, Family and Children's Services, as well as that of many MPPs from all parties, this proposal was also considered by Management Board of Cabinet, but it was rejected. The reason offered at that board meeting, apparently, was that they couldn't decide if children's mental health properly belonged to Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, or if it belonged to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Now I ask you: these people had a hope of getting this \$50 million, and what did they do? They found an excuse. They agreed that it was needed. They agreed that they had to provide this \$50 million. What happened? They found an excuse to delay. It says here that when no mention was made of children's mental health in the budget, officials suggested that perhaps the matter would be addressed in the throne speech. What it says in the throne speech is that the \$250 million was a re-announcement from the last budget.

I guess what I'm trying to say here is that these are real issues. We can sit here and play all kinds of games about the one-upmanship in our rhetoric, as one sits on either side of the House. But when I see and I watch the actions—not the rhetoric, because the rhetoric is easy, the rhetoric is all about how wonderful everyone is—and I see the real needs that are in my community and in communities across this province, there's a blind eye. It's easy to turn a blind eye to children's mental health, because they don't vote. It's a very small number. It's easy to say, "There's a doctor shortage; we'll just have to deal with it," rather than to take action and responsibility. It's easy not to take action. This government finds it very easy just to have these wonderful pieces of advertising—millions, hundreds of millions of dollars going into advertisements—when a fraction of that could have helped children's mental health services.

I don't understand why any government does not have enough of a social conscience to address those immediate needs. Do you know what? They could do it; they really could do it. They could do it, if they had the political will to address these issues. They have none of that political will. That's the fundamental difference between the Conservative ideology that goes around with blinkers. In other words, "We all have to fit everything into this box. We all say the same thing because we're given a piece of paper and we have to spout this party line no matter what."

I believe that if the members on the other side of the House thought thoroughly about what they were doing

when they went to Magna to present the budget, the honourable members across the way would have protested to the Premier and used their privileges as members to hold the budget speech in the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

**2010**

**Mr Prue:** I listened to the two speakers, but I would like to comment on the speech by the member from Sarnia. With respect to the other speaker, I thought she made points a little bit more in tune with what we're here to talk about today, and that is the throne speech.

I do echo her sentiments about everything that went wrong with the budget at Magna. I think some of you know I was sitting here in my seat alone and then was joined by two of my colleagues a little later on. The budget should have been here. Perhaps I'm naive, but I was sitting here in the hope that you would change your mind.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Prue:** Pardon? I didn't have a black suit.

But really when we come down to it, she was talking about some very important things that go around hospitals and go around the health of this province. Quite frankly, reading both the budget and the throne speech, one who believes in public health in Ontario must feel a little tinge of remorse, and an apprehension of where this government is going. They quite boldly talk about privatization, P3s and going out to the highest bidder with our health.

Quite frankly, I think this government has not learned the lessons of other jurisdictions in Canada. They have not learned about the cataract surgery that was privatized in Manitoba and how much money the Manitoba government has saved by taking it back in-house. They have not learned in our own province from the auditor who said what a disaster and how expensive the Sunnybrook experiment was. They have not learned from the United States, especially South Health in Atlanta, Georgia, which is going through huge legal costs. It looks more and more like Enron every day, with costs escalating out of all proportion for the government in that state.

Quite frankly, the government should be looking more at building up our hospitals, our health units and far less—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Further questions? Comments?

**Mr O'Toole:** I couldn't resist the opportunity to respond to the member for Sarnia-Lambton. It's always important to consider the viewer. I think perhaps she forgot that she was actually speaking with the people of Ontario.

I want to refresh their memory of one of the wonderful days this spring, at this Legislature on April 30th. I'm just going to read a few lines that really bring a sense of what the Lieutenant Governor, James Bartleman, was saying on behalf of the Premier, and really, quite honestly, on behalf of the thousands of Ontarians that our Premier and our government have consulted with. It was



really through the Premier, through the Lieutenant Governor, that we were speaking directly to the people of Ontario.

These are just a few of the lines that for me were sort of a milestone; a moment in time; a crystallization of the sentiments of the people of Ontario. It's about the promise of Ontario "that inspires our citizens—young and old—to hope, dream and achieve." It's almost poetic, really.

I think it's with that sentiment that I think of my five children and providing hope and opportunity for them. This government, or whatever government happens to be here—it should be us, of course—but I think that's what's most important. Creating that opportunity is where we fundamentally disagree. We often refer here to the lost decade of the NDP. I know it's overworked. But we don't want to go backwards. We've made significant progress. This is no time to turn your back on this government because, steady as it goes, we have demonstrated that we can create the economy which creates the hope and opportunity for our young people.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** There's so much of this bill that needs to be exposed to the public. But I'm going to focus in on one particular area which says, "Your government recognizes that there are some Ontarians who need extra help to cope with disabilities."

For eight years this government has absolutely defied any services to these people, and when a private member's bill put forward by Mr Martin called for an increase during what is traditionally a free vote, the benches were packed over there. Even the minister voted against a cost-of-living increase. I challenge that statement.

"It understands that people with disabilities often have special needs that make it difficult for them to work. That's why it will increase Ontario disability support program payments to better help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and dignified lives."

Great rhetoric, but when you examine the so-called budget, there is no funding whatsoever provided. In fact, I understand that at the session following the presentation of this info-budget, there was a question about it and the finance minister indicated there was in fact no money being provided for people with disabilities. So this is a tease; there are no finances behind it.

It says, "Your government will reform support for children with special needs to ensure that parents have a greater say in how their needs are met." For eight years parents have decried the lack of special services for their children. This government has found \$400 million for ads. Does it take an election for them to throw a little bit out? We've had children who started and now have left elementary school without receiving the special services they needed for it.

"Because no child should live in poverty or depend on welfare, your government will provide a special benefit to meet the unique needs of children who require a helping hand." In my community, in the Hastings and

Prince Edward District School Board there are 3,500 children who have to have breakfast every day at school because there is not money at home. Providing some food for them should not be used as an election ploy. Where has this government been for the last eight years for the hungry children in this province? This is what makes people cynical, when they throw out a few crumbs at election time.

**Mr Bisson:** That certainly was an interesting discussion, particularly the comments around health care. I've got to ask you a couple of questions. We know that the Tories have an agenda. Part of their agenda is to privatize the building, construction and ongoing maintenance of hospitals. They call those, in the jargon, P3s. Quite frankly, we in the New Democratic Party of Ontario don't believe that's a good idea. We think all public dollars in the health care system should be going directly into the health care system, both capital and operation. That's why when you look at our platform, which is the Public Power platform—as I said, if you want to see it, it's [publicpower.ca](http://publicpower.ca)—we clearly say in there that we will put an end to the concept of private hospitals.

I listened to your leader. I was in Ottawa about three or four months ago and I remember seeing him on one of the local television stations. He seemed to be in favour—actually, he didn't seem to be in favour, he was in favour of the P3 hospital in Ottawa. But then I saw him a little while later when he was somewhere else and he said he was opposed to P3. I just find it a little bit interesting that when I go to Ottawa I hear Dalton McGuinty saying he's in favour of privatizing the construction and ongoing maintenance of hospitals, albeit run by the public sector, and then when I'm in another community I see he's opposed. It's a little bit confusing when you see the position falling on both sides. Could it be that basically there's one thing said to the local constituents and quite another thing said to constituents in other parts of the province?

In the few seconds I have left—and I know you didn't comment on it—I think one issue we can agree on is the whole concept of what the Tories are doing vis-à-vis the throne speech when it comes to mandatory retirement. I think quite frankly what the Tories are doing when it comes to this whole issue of mandatory retirement is moving from a concept of what we call Freedom 55 to a concept of Freedom 75. If I get an opportunity, I will speak to that a little bit later.

**The Acting Speaker:** Now either, although only one, of the original speakers may take up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr Sergio:** On my behalf and on behalf of the member for Sarnia-Lambton, I would like to thank all the members who participated in the debate. Let me say that the issues that Ontarians find of most interest, perhaps not necessarily in this order, are health, education and the environment. Those are the main issues, other than some issues that may come to the forefront on a daily basis.

Let me say what Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader, has been saying every day for the last several years with



respect to health care. We did say that we want to provide health care—affordable, available, accessible, 24/7—seven days a week, 24 hours a day; no two-tier health care. We have not forgotten that people couldn't get an early diagnostic, couldn't get an MRI test for months. We had to have Ontarians go all the way to Buffalo or some other place in the States. We have said that we are going to have a minimum of waiting time, which by the way is in the speech from the throne. Mr McGuinty has been saying that in order to provide good, efficient, quality health care we have to impose some conditions.

Some four years ago, I believe, we came up with the Early Years report for our schools, for our young students—a maximum of 20 students per class. We said that we'd like to see certified teachers teaching our kids. We said that parents should have the choice of schools, and now we see it in their budget. These are some of the details that our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has been saying all along for years, and now the people of Ontario will have the choice to deal with that soon, when we have an election.

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**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for further debate.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I'm going to do something a little bit unusual in this session here: I possibly am going to talk about the throne speech, which I know is unusual here tonight. I would like to talk about it because I believe its content is what will direct this province and the government for the future. It gives a vision, it gives a direction, and I believe it supports the gains that our government has made in this great province over the last seven and a half years, and we will expand on those gains through the content of the throne speech.

If you look at some of those gains, the gains being things like five balanced budgets, five in a row since the early, early 1900s; more health care spending—and you've heard it from other members here that we've gone from \$17 billion-plus up to \$27 billion in spite of having dollars taken back by the federal government back a number of years ago. So we've done it with the increase in revenues that we have achieved through increased jobs. Again, as we've heard today, we've had over a million jobs created in this province in comparison to the previous government. I think they lost 10,000 jobs during their five years. Again, and we've always said this, there are only two ways of creating the funds, the dollars, so that we can offer the services to the people of Ontario that they want and that they require and that they need and that they demand, and that is, you either raise taxes or you raise revenues. Our government does not believe in raising taxes, but we want to do the same as you would do in any type of business: you create the revenue to make the operation successful, gains being increases in education, things like a new curriculum, increases in special education funding, major increases in trans-

portation—all of the things which will establish a good foundation to lead us into the future.

We have an economy in Ontario, I believe, second to none, and if you look at what's happening in some of the US states and some of the other countries, we are in an absolutely tremendous position. That's because of the fact of the programs and the vision and the policies that we have established over the last seven and a half years. I believe that is due to strong leadership, leadership under the former Premier, Mike Harris, and now under Premier Eves, leadership that I believe was very evident during the past SARS crisis and is indeed to some degree still there. Within hours, I believe within an hour and a half, Premier Eves declared the province to be in a state of health emergency.

The role our Minister of Health took was indeed a leadership role. Tony Clement was Ontario's hero, a person who did his job and did it well. Where was the Liberal leader? Where was the NDP leader? The only time you've heard from them, and that's in the last couple of days—and it always amazes me—is when after the job is pretty well done people come out and decide that they have all the answers. Where were they when we needed answers? Where were they when we needed the co-operation? If you look at what happened in Ottawa, I believe it's a disgrace. You have the leader of this country on vacation. Do they not have phones down there? Do they not have any types of media down there so he could have at least made some comments? You have the Minister of Health in the Canadian government, McLellan, and you don't hear of her at all. So I would suggest that what happened in Ontario was the fact that we have two major leaders, one being the Premier, Ernie Eves, and the other being the Minister of Health, Tony Clement, and I compliment them both for it.

But more importantly are the health care providers who have worked hand in hand with the various officials to try and combat this very, very serious health situation that we were in recently. I wrote a letter about a week and a half ago to our local hospital to say thank you. Instead of criticizing what has gone on, maybe we should just say thank you. I cannot believe that everybody's got the answers after the fact, but when we needed them there, nobody seemed to be around, least of all the two leaders across the way. There is a difference in leadership; some know how to do it, some don't. Again, I compliment Minister Clement and I compliment the Premier very much, and I also compliment all of the health care professionals, who did an admirable job in this situation.

Talking about the throne speech, again, as our policy has been over the last number of years, let's talk to the people and see what they would like to see in the throne speech. It's interesting, I think, that the Liberal leader came out and said that we stole the policy. How can you steal something from nothing? You can't. Do you suggest that all of those 10,000 or 11,000 people came up only with what you suggest might be in your little booklets?

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** Five.

**Mr Stewart:** Are there five? Sorry. OK, ??I read the first four and there was nothing in there, so I look forward to the other ones, with the hopes that we may have some type of direction about what might happen.

But I want to compliment the 10,000 or 11,000 people, a couple hundred of whom were from my riding, who came in and suggested what they thought was the way Ontario should look in the future. The unfortunate part of it is that we politicians sometimes look about as far ahead as what our term is, and I would highly suggest that what is in this throne speech gives a direction in the long term for this province, and I compliment those people who gave us the information. They want much the same as they did in the budget. People from every walk of life were involved in this consultation, and I'm proud of our government to have made that happen, and I think the input we got from the people was just absolutely wonderful, to show the direction we should go in the future.

Speaking of the throne speech, there are a number of things in the throne speech that I'm extremely pleased about. One is the increase that will happen to the Ontario disability support program. Some of us on this side of the House have been pushing very hard for that to happen over the last year or so. Unfortunately, those on disability for various reasons do not have the ability to go out and seek employment or get jobs, and I believe that they should be able to lead productive and dignified lives. With the increase in the cost of living these days, I believe these people should be considered to get some type of increase. So I'm very, very pleased with that.

The other one, as has been mentioned today, is allowing seniors to retire at the time of their choosing. It kind of makes me chuckle from time to time; we lay these folks off at 55 or 60 or 65 and then because we know they've got tremendous expertise, we hire them back as consultants for probably twice what they made when they were working for us. They seem to have excellent expertise when they come back as consultants, so why would we not allow them to stay on the job with agreement from both sides, both from them and management and owners of the company? So I'm extremely pleased that we're going to be considering that and looking at it.

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The other one that really makes me very pleased and makes me very happy is the fact that we're going to crack down again on drunk drivers. It was interesting that right after this came out, that after two convictions they would lose their licence for life, the lady—and I'm sorry, I don't remember her name, but I believe she's the head of the organization MADD. I didn't realize this, but she came on and talked about her husband and her son, both killed by drunk drivers. I think this type of commitment by our government is something that should be commended.

I would highly suggest to the opposition, who didn't talk about anything in the throne speech, that maybe they should read it so they have a good understanding. Again, one of the members from the third party made the suggestion that there was nothing of substance in the throne

speech. Does that mean that you don't condone the fact that people should lose their licence for life after they've been convicted of drunk driving, or do you condone drunk driving? I don't know. I don't know from your comment, but I would suggest there is major substance in that.

I was talking to a lady a couple of days ago and we were talking about the investment of \$1 billion in the new cancer research centre. I think that is very, very important. Unfortunately, it's a disease that is claiming far too many lives, a disease that is claiming lives no matter what age. If we can invest the kinds of dollars that we should for research into cancer, I think it will make Ontario a better place all around. Certainly, as things like free tuition for current and future medical school students and, again, the same with nurses—you know, it's funny. You hear about the shortage of doctors and if you listen to some people, you'd think it was only in Ontario. No, it is worldwide. We all know it, we all understand it, and we've got to find a way to solve the problem.

I can remember back in about 1991 or 1992, we had a meeting at the library in Peterborough. The MPP of the day suggested there was absolutely no underservice problem in the city or the county of Peterborough—none whatsoever—and yet at that particular time, there were less doctors than there are now. We have a serious problem worldwide. We've got to make sure that we have the support, ie doctors and nurses, if we are going to make sure we continue to have the best quality health care possible.

I get very upset when I hear people—and I heard it tonight from across the way—knocking our health care system. Yes, there are always ways to improve. You can improve anything if you work hard enough at it. But there are a whole lot of health care professionals out there who are bending over backwards to work in somewhat interesting circumstances, but all I hear from some of you folks in this House is how terrible it is. I think that's going against the ability and the dedication of these health care professionals. So on a personal note, I just want to say thank you to them. I think they're doing a tremendous job. Again, I think this throne speech enhances that as well.

Another area, where we are going to allow athletes, musicians, artists and tradespeople to act as expert instructors or volunteers in our schools, is long overdue. It used to happen when I was a little bit younger. We had volunteers, we had people whom we brought in from trades, from other areas who were instructors in our schools. Unfortunately, unions got so involved that they discontinued it, or certainly did not allow that to happen.

It was interesting. I can always remember them saying that Wayne Gretzky could not go into a school and teach anybody how to play hockey. How ridiculous that is. I suggest to you that maybe if we had more people coming into those schools as expert instructors, we would interest more people in the trades.

It was interesting that a couple of weeks ago I had a fairly large meeting with the CAW in Peterborough, and



the representatives there were saying that we should be getting back to offering and introducing kids to trades in elementary school. The problem is, when they get into grade 12 and they say they'd like to be a carpenter or a toolmaker or whatever it might be, they haven't been introduced to it until that time. They go into community college and about a year later think, "What in the name of goodness am I doing here?" Let's get them involved at an early age. Let's make sure that the kids know the opportunities that are there.

A few years ago, if you weren't a doctor or a lawyer or a teacher or a professional, you weren't very much. I think that's wrong because now all of a sudden we don't have carpenters, we don't have tradespeople of many different types, whether machinists or mechanics or toolmakers or bricklayers. You can't get them. I can tell you that they are just as much a profession as any of the others are. So I'm very pleased that that is happening and is in the throne speech.

Again, it's long overdue to allow the tools and resources to ensure that phonics are available in all schools, something that teachers have been talking about for the last number of years.

Again, as I said, encouraging young people to seek rewarding and exciting careers in the skilled trades—I always use a bit of an analogy. If you went in and asked possibly one of the—I don't know what they call them now, but in my day they were guidance counsellors. They're probably different—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Stewart:** I don't know what they are now, but anyway, if you went in and you said, "I'd like to be a truck driver. How can I become a truck driver?" I would suggest to you that most people would not know how. I know a fellow who became a truck driver. He now owns the company, and it's a very large company. So let me assure you that any job, with dedication and work, is a good job.

The final comment I want to make is regarding introducing legislation to provide quality auditors for health, education and municipal services: I believe in that 100%. In fact, if I had my way, we would audit every organization we fund to make sure it is being run well and being run right. Not that you're trying to spy; I'm not accusing anybody of not operating it well, but what it does say is that if we have quality auditors, if we have external auditors, if we maybe just find those extra savings that can make a difference, which may not necessarily be in administration but could go to the people who really need it, whether it's the patient, the mentally retarded child, daycare, whatever it might be—that's what external quality auditors will do.

Again, I believe that this throne speech is a vision and a direction for the future. I am extremely proud to be associated with a government that has this type of vision for the future. We live in a great province and a great country and with this type of vision, with this type of leadership that we have in our Premier Harris as well as

our government caucus, this province will continue to move ahead.

**2040**

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for questions and comments. The members have up to two minutes.

**Mr Crozier:** I am pleased to reply with a few words to the member from Peterborough. Just at the end of his speech he mentioned Premier Harris. I hope we're not going back that way. You are really going in the other direction.

**Mr Bradley:** A Freudian slip.

**Mr Crozier:** It was a Freudian slip.

There are a couple of things that I agree with the member on. One is that he mentioned the use of and the cost of consultants and the fact that many of the consultants I suspect that the government has hired over the past few years have been in fact former employees of the civil service whom they've let go and then brought back at additional expense. I think the Legislature, and certainly the folks at home, would like to know that this government, when it comes to consultants, has spent \$7,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. That's how much they spend on consultants. So I agree with the member from Peterborough. I think we should strengthen our civil service and we should have the kind of staff, employees and support groups that can make us aware of the fact that they are better than the consultants that are often hired.

Near the end of his comments, he mentioned how much he supports the auditing of the public sector. Well, if several years ago you had only adopted my colleague John Gerretsen's bill that would have given the Provincial Auditor the authority to do value-for-money audits in what is called the MUSH sector—that is municipalities, universities, schools, and hospitals—where we spend 80% of our money.

**Mr Bisson:** I just really get a kick out of the Tories sometimes. They stand up and they talk about the 10 lost years. Have they forgotten how long they've been in power? I remember when those guys got elected in 1995. They've been there almost a decade and here they are talking about the 10 lost years. I think you guys had better get with the times. You've been there now for two terms, you've been there for exactly eight years and you're basically talking about the 10 lost years of what the Liberals did 15 years ago and what we did eight years ago? You've been the government for eight years; where have you been? If you've got a problem with something, you should have fixed it by now. So don't come in here and talk about the eight lost years.

Then I hear them talk about how Ernie Eves was the only political leader in Ontario to take a position on SARS and to do something. Do we remember when the SARS outbreak was happening, what was going on? My friend here, Michael Prue from Beaches-East York, was out there presenting a 10-point plan about what to do on the SARS crisis. My leader, Howard Hampton, was out there a number of times talking about what needed to be done

in order to deal with the SARS crisis. Where was Ernie? He was golfing in Arizona, for God's sake. He was nowhere to be found. Then you come over here and talk to me about, "Oh, Ernie Eves, he showed real leadership." "Fore!" That was the only leadership he was showing. So don't come over here and start talking to me about leadership. Boy, oh boy, we say in French, « Ils ont du culot. » And the other saying we have is, « Front autour de la tête. » That means to say that they've got a forehead all the way around their heads.

Anyway, the other thing he goes on to talk about is apprenticeships, how proud the member from Peterborough is when it comes to apprenticeship training. You guys have basically gutted the apprenticeship training system in Ontario. If you're an apprentice now, you've got to pay to go to trade school, something we never had to do before—I'm a tradesperson; I should know what I talk about—and less and less people are going into the apprenticeship trades program because you haven't been out there trying to promote good apprenticeships. What an interesting comment that was.

**Hon Mr Clark:** I want to comment to the member for Timmins-James Bay. He just mentioned SARS. It was interesting today that we stood in the House and watched the Leader of the Opposition in question period attack the public health profession and the government on SARS.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** Yeah, he did.

Here's what the world was saying: "When Canadian health authorities quickly instituted the two key strategies for epidemic control—seeking out ill people and ... isolating them—they turned the SARS epidemic in Ontario from an event that might have had 200,000 victims to one" with less "than 320." Now that's what independent people are saying.

Carlos Castillo-Chavez, the chief modeller, said, "Essentially, what the Canadians have really shown is that what could have been a major catastrophe can be controlled by early diagnosis and isolation...."

"As far as I can tell, this is unprecedented," to the member for St Catharines. He's a mathematical epidemiologist at Cornell University, an independent—clearly not a Liberal. He stated, as he was visiting here, "It shows that quick diagnosis and quick intervention work dramatically well, and that delays are very ... costly."

Here's the international community praising the Canadian experience, praising the Ontario government, praising the people who actually made a difference on SARS. And what do we have from the leader of the loyal opposition? He stands up to begin condemning it. He stands up in a pathetic, partisan attempt to boost his own fortunes because the Minister of Health has done an outstanding job. He's the first Minister of Health that I can recall in the history of this province who got a standing ovation from all members in this House, and that is something to be proud of.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** I want to stand and commend the member for Peterborough for trying to at least stick to the throne speech in his comments. He

veered ever so slightly to try to take a shot at the leader of the official opposition and to criticize the federal Liberals, but we've grown accustomed to that in this House, and we ignore it for what it's worth.

I do want to comment on a few of the things he did say with regard to using expert volunteers in schools. I spent 32 years in the classroom and in schools, and we welcomed volunteers to share their expertise. There is absolutely nothing new in that initiative. Volunteers have always been welcome in the public schools of Ontario to share their expertise, and they did that in conjunction with the fine, dedicated, professional teachers which we found in our classrooms in the 32 years I spent within the schools of Ontario.

He talked about the drunk driving initiative with regard to banning driver's licences permanently. He mentions the letter from MADD. It was a good letter, but it was a letter that was sent in October of 2000 when I introduced a private member's bill. There were all kinds of those letters. I gave them to the transportation minister at the time and I gave them to the Attorney General across the way at the time, and this government did nothing with it. It is terrible to think that the government across the way would play politics with the lives of Ontarians. This throne speech has lots of work to be done to it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Now the member for Peterborough has up to two minutes to respond.

**2050**

**Mr Stewart:** Just a couple of comments. First of all, to the member for Timmins-James Bay: I never talk about the lost 10 years. I was in municipal politics back when the Liberals and NDP were there, and I constantly try and forget those 10 years. I was there, so I don't want to talk about it at all.

It's interesting. The member from Sudbury talked about the comment I made about drunk driving. I would have thought it would have been in your so-called platform if it was that important to you, and it appears it's not, so I assume that—

**Hon Mr Clark:** Just an oversight.

**Mr Stewart:** Oversight or rhetoric. I never talked about a letter. I talked about the lady from MADD coming on television and talking to the people of Ontario about her husband and about her son.

The other thing, of course, when he talked about volunteers—absolutely. There have been volunteers. But one of the comments, if you read—and again, I highly suggest that you guys take this throne speech home and read it. I really implore you to. One is that it's suggesting not only volunteers, but expert instructors. I believe expert instructors is not something that has been allowed over the last number of years. I made reference to Wayne Gretzky and his ability.

I didn't read their fifth little booklet. By golly, I hope there's stuff in there, because there's nothing in the rest. I hope it is there, that I can really see some of the things that I'm hearing today that they're criticizing us for but yet don't seem to do anything about themselves.



On a final note, if you're going to call the kettle black, make sure yours is very shiny.

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for further debate.

**Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** It's very good to be back in the House today. Let me just say, on behalf of all the residents of Windsor West, it's about time. It's about time we opened the Legislature. It's about time we got an opportunity to talk about the things that this government has not been doing for residents across Ontario, but primarily for the residents of Windsor West.

Let me tell you, my community reacted much the same as the rest of Ontarians when we watched this fake budget process in some plant in Brampton. How innovative the Tories thought they were being when they introduced this thing. Has it been a couple, three weeks now? We already know that, given it was a fake budget, we can't even assume that the contents of that budget will or will not be the same as what eventually comes in this House in the form of a budget. So we don't know, with all of the rhetoric in the answers in question period today, if those numbers are even the numbers in terms of what your so-called investments will be.

I want to talk about this throne speech. I want to talk about what was not in that throne speech. Today in the House I asked the minister a most significant question that impacts on my community, on the auto industry, and on the face of jobs and the future of jobs for the balance of Ontario. The auto sector was not in that throne speech. That is astonishing to me, that what accounts for one in six jobs in this province, the auto sector, was not mentioned. The minister, in her response to that question today, actually just listed and rhymed off all of these other announcements and things that have happened in the auto sector. Do you know what the Ontario government's role in all of those announcements was? Zero. They've had no influence whatsoever on what the auto sector has done on its own in this province.

Finally, we are being called to the table, along with the federal government, to participate and negotiate a settlement and a package to bring a DaimlerChrysler plant to Windsor. Why is it that every time this government has to work in concert with our federal colleagues, we fall down, we can't come to the table together and actually have a deal that is going to benefit our province? With all of the game-playing going on, let me tell you, what I'm expecting Windsor West residents to say is, "We'll put a Liberal government in Ontario so they can actually work with their colleagues in Ottawa and come to a resolution."

There was a significant amount of money that was put on the table in the Windsor area, an announcement by the Prime Minister and the Premier on border infrastructure so desperately needed in the Windsor area. What with post-9/11, with the massive increase in the movement of trucks through the centre of my community and to the border, the just-in-time requirements of our auto sector and what we need to do to improve our border, these two

levels of government made a grand announcement of \$300 million for a solution. Can you believe that since then—and it has been months—we've not been able to get the provincial government to work with the federal government to actually make an announcement in terms of what we are going to do in the next step to actually fixing the problem? We have every dynamic imaginable in this \$300-million project to fix our border and we are embarrassed by the process we've seen here: politics at the local level, the provincial level, the federal level, the proponents, who vies for whose ear and who gets a one-upmanship on the latest plan that is being vetted through the media, and not being done in the best interests of my community.

So I am glad to see that the Minister of Transportation is here and has told me that he is waiting to speak with the mayor of my city personally, so that we can be certain that we're not going to read in the news when the announcement is going to be, that we're going to have the decency of good communication until we know what the status is in terms of this border plan. That's what I expect out of my Ontario government.

And I expected somewhere in this throne speech some reference to a \$150-million investment to make our borders work better. This government knows that any benefits to our economy are largely because of our improved trade position, and that has everything to do with how well our borders work. So it's in our best interests to keep that at the forefront.

The auto sector is obviously next in line. It should have been mentioned. It's not enough to talk about R&D amounts of money that's not even specified just for auto, so that you can send DaimlerChrysler begging for the pot of money that may be there with the rest of the sectors when we have the opportunity for 2,500 permanent, great jobs in my community. We have an expectation that we'll move that negotiation toward an announcement that we will be able to build that plant in my community.

Much of this throne speech dealt with the health system. I could not believe the number of re-announcements in this throne speech. In all of the announcements this government has had over the years in the last eight years, it was like a broken record: "We will have more nurses. We will have more doctors." That's what this said. Do you know what this amounts to? Drivel. After eight years, you have no credibility to talk about how you will bring more nurses to practise in Ontario. You have zero credibility on improving the number of doctors that we have working in this province. Since this government came to power, we have a worse ratio than ever in our province as far as the number of nurses, even those that are working full-time. My leader addressed that today in his response to the throne speech and in question period.

But all of these elements—we "will launch a Premier's council on mental health." Have we not talked about what the mental health sector needs in Ontario? It is time for some action. Then we see more mention of additional MRIs and CTs and building hospitals through the private sector. Have we forgotten to mention in the

throne speech that this is the government that will move on privatization of our health sector? It will take a Dalton McGuinty Liberal government to eliminate those P3s from Ontario, because they will be public hospitals. And private MRIs and private CTs—has anyone addressed the issue of where you are going to find the radiologists who are going to run those private clinics? Will you be draining the public system? Where will you find the technologists?

This is a government that is simply driven by announcements and never goes to the root of the problem to solve it. They have the gall to talk about the medical school. I'd like to see a free-standing medical school in my community. We are southern urban, with the worst ratio of physicians practising in my town. It would be welcome news. Instead, we get some kind of hybrid of a satellite affiliated with the rural medical training something or other, all because you want to make an announcement and make people believe that you actually intend to do something to bolster and improve our health sector. You have no credibility on the health front, and we plan to go to the people as quickly as you will call an election to say that.

You can't be trusted with Ontario's health system, and you are running ads and spending tens of millions of dollars to tell people how wonderful it is. You actually had the gall in this throne speech to talk about how the emergency room waiting times are lessened. That is a bald-faced lie. They are not lessened. If anything, there are fewer staff to keep track. There are other elements that you mentioned in here about increasing home care services. That is a bald-faced lie. There are thousands of people today who don't have—

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**The Acting Speaker:** Please take your seat. I know the member wants to make her point as strongly as possible. I know also she would like to remain within the parliamentary rules. I'm going to ask you to withdraw that, please. As far as I'm concerned, you're too close to the line in terms of your language, so please withdraw.

**Ms Pupatello:** I withdraw.

The throne speech talks about increases to home care. That is an outright error in printing, because that is not the case. We today in Ontario have thousands of people who don't get home care services that used to get them. We have people who wait as long as they ever did in an emergency room and as long as they ever did for hip surgeries and knee surgeries or to get in to see a specialist.

I tell you, Speaker, we have to sit and watch the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario sit in your chair and read the throne speech, and that people could believe, could hope to believe that these things might come true? After eight years in this House, I have heard the line before about nurse practitioners, more nurses, more doctors. None of that has happened. The only solution for us is a Liberal government. We are the only party that will bring this to Ontario because we are the only party that has it as a priority. You have had the luxury of voter support

because of your tax policy, granted. But those days are over. It's time for a change, and the Ontario Liberal Party represent the only party for change.

**The Acting Speaker:** I gather the member for St Catharines is going to use the other 10 minutes.

**Mr Bradley:** Yes. Continuing on, I had to explain to my constituents, who saw me quite often, that the Legislature of Ontario did not sit between December 12, 2002, and April 30, 2003. In fact, the first question period after December 12, 2002, was May 1, 2003. They were in shock and awe, to mention what some defence minister used at one time, at this case.

I'll tell you, they saw the federal House in action. They turned the television set on, they assumed we were in action, and I had to explain to them that Premier Eves and Ministers Sterling, Clark, Klees and Coburn and others—I won't say Tsubouchi because he probably wanted to be here—all these ministers did not want to face the questions to be directed to them by the opposition and the media scrum outside. They simply wanted to advertise around the province, and advertise they did. If you opened your mailbox last month, every second day it seemed another propaganda sheet came from the government.

There wasn't any question at all that it was partisan. Even my Tory friends in my community—some of them were annoyed, and some of them were laughing and saying, "Isn't this something, that they would have the audacity to send out yet another pamphlet that is so partisan?"

It would be different if these people didn't have a war chest like you've never seen, funds gathered from the richest and the most powerful people in the province who attend their fundraisers. So they could afford it. The Minister of Transportation, now Minister of Labour, had a huge—didn't you make \$100,000 at one of your fundraisers? I know it was that much money. I heard public money was showing up there, universities and municipalities and so on making out their cheques to the Conservative Party. I think that is totally inappropriate.

But there they are. You've driven down the highways. The former minister of highways is here. The new minister of highways is here. Everywhere I look on the highways of Ontario, even when there's no construction site, there's a huge sign with Ernie Eves's name on it, "Building Ontario Together" or something of that nature.

That is an abuse of the taxpayer. I'm waiting for the local taxpayers' coalition to protest—because I know Frank Sheehan used to be the head of that—the squandering of public money on government advertising.

Today, in a flight of rhetoric, I think I had it up to \$400 million, but it's at least \$300 million that you people have spent on blatantly partisan, self-serving advertising. Turn on the television set, on comes an ad. Even when you're trying to advertise something that may be fairly legitimate—your new bonds that you've got out—you have to start the ad with "Ontario's never been better than it is now." So this is clearly partisan.



The Chair of Management Board is here. I know in his heart of hearts he is steaming at the fact they're violating even his weak guidelines on advertising by this kind of advertising: radio ads talking about the virtues of the infomercial, the so-called budget of Ontario; the full-page ads that always have to have something at the bottom, "Making health care work for you." Always this either—I was going to say "subliminal"; it's certainly not subliminal now. It is so obvious that you people are squandering taxpayers' dollars in contempt of this Legislature and in contempt for the people of Ontario, an abuse of public office. I said, when they were doing it during a by-election campaign, that that's what you would have called cheating in those days. The by-election is not on, but we know there is an election coming soon.

That's one thing that I think we have a solution for in the opposition, and that is to have all government advertising vetted by an independent office such as the Provincial Auditor. They have that in Britain. They showed, on a program I was watching on CBC, Ontario government ads. The person in Britain who vets them shook his head and laughed. He said, "We would never pass these ads as being non-partisan."

I saw some good messages, I saw some reasonable messages from your government, but most of it is a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

But let's get to a positive solution we've come to in St Catharines. Remember the hospital destruction commission that went around Ontario trying to close—Mike Harris and Ernie Eves sent this around the province to try to close hospitals and force amalgamations and so on. We've had some disagreements over the years between the two main hospitals in St Catharines, the Hotel Dieu Health Sciences Hospital and the general hospital. I'll tell you something. They've come to an agreement. Not the agreement that was going to be imposed by the Harris-Eves hospital destruction commission, but one they came up with for themselves. They said, "Look, let's have the two hospitals across from each other. No use going back to the old hospital buildings, trying to retrofit them." Two new hospital buildings constructed right across from each other, a lot of sharing that would save money, and perhaps the money saved, could make up for the local component to it. I've got to tell you, there was a lot of enthusiasm in the community. It crossed partisan lines, it crossed religious lines. There was a great deal of enthusiasm for it and I commend it to the Minister of Health for his approval. I think it's a solution and a good solution, locally initiated, locally supported and it will be good for the people of St Catharines. It is a far cry from what the hospital destruction commission was going to impose upon our community.

I want to talk about public transportation because I see the former Minister of Transportation here, who represents Stoney Creek. The federal government has indicated that they are ready, willing and able to give money for GO Transit. I say to my friend the member for Niagara Falls, I know the member for Erie-Lincoln and I

will welcome that. We have been advocating it for some period of time. Others have now joined the bandwagon in advocating that we have public transit of the rail kind that's enhanced and that people will be able to travel more easily on the public transit system. I think that it's nice to see. This government totally abandoned it. You will remember this, Mr Speaker. This government completely abandoned public transit. They got out of the business completely. They got shamed into coming back into the system. The opposition raised this daily in the House, the municipalities were beside themselves, and finally the government of Ontario got shamed into coming back into the system.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** It was shock and awe.

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**Mr Bradley:** Shock and awe once again.

I hope as well, because the Minister of Transportation is here, that there is federal money as well out there that will help in the highway system. You will know, as you go through St Catharines, that there is a need for improvements to the QEW, particularly the egress roads and the access roads. I know the minister has expressed his view about highway safety, and I think an investment in that area—and it would be a progressive investment—would do an awful lot to improve safety and the flow of traffic. It's not that you want to have huge multi-lane highways, but you do want them to be safe.

We want to ensure, as well, that the double cohort is not the nightmare that everybody knows it's going to be. You people rush into this—

**Hon Mr Clark:** That you said it was going to be.

**Mr Bradley:** Now, there isn't anybody out there in Ontario, outside of the minister and the Premier, who believes that the double cohort isn't going to cause a lot of problems for students in this province. We will see that happen a little later on in the year.

I want the member to know that people are annoyed with the natural gas rates increasing willy-nilly, that without you people controlling them, without the Ontario Energy Board controlling them, there's a great concern now about the cost of automobile insurance and other insurance premiums going through the ceiling and costing people a lot of money.

There is also a concern that for once—just for once—the money that the federal government transfers to the provincial government for health care be spent on health care and not on tax cuts for the wealthiest people in this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

**Mr Bisson:** The member from St Catharines—I always love listening to his comments. He's always most informative and most entertaining. But I'm jealous of the member from St Catharines. You've got roads in your riding. You've got roads, you've got highways with pavement on them. I've got the Minister of Transportation here. I've got parts of my riding that don't even

have roads, never mind paved roads. They don't even have roads. So can we borrow some of your highways and take some of those things and bring them up and put them from Moosonee all the way up to Fort Severn? It would really be nice to have a road.

We're going to be opening a diamond mine up in Attawapiskat, and a big part of the cost of being able to operate that mine is transportation because most everything's going to be fly-in. So I get really jealous when I hear you guys down here talking about how you want to four-lane a highway. I'd take a single trail unpaved, all the way up from Moosonee to Attawapiskat, Fort Severn and Peawanuck. People up there would be ecstatic if they could have that. In fact, the only road that we get is a winter one, which basically the only time you can use it is about two months a year by way of freezing it. It's the only road that you can have. In fact, when you drive from Moosonee to Moose Factory in the wintertime, it's an ice bridge. That's the only way you're able to get across.

So I'm very envious, and I say to the Minister of Transportation, if you're looking at a place to build roads, I've got a great spot for you up on the James Bay. Even if you did a link from Cochrane up to Moosonee, there would be a huge economic boom up in that area if you were to do that. And if you want to go a little bit further, there are all kinds of communities like Fort Albany and Kashechewan and Attawapiskat and Peawanuck and Fort Severn. They would really love to have roads because they're spending—did you know it's 85 cents—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Listen to this. It's 85 cents per kilowatt hour to generate electricity in Peawanuck—85 cents—because they have to basically bring their fuel in for the generators. So imagine the good that we could do if we had a policy that actually put roads up in the James Bay. It would be a way of being able to develop the economy and to give those people a piece of Ontario that we all take for granted.

**Hon Mr Clark:** I'd like to respond to the member from St Catharines. I got a satellite dish about two years ago. Fascinating. Do you know what's interesting about having a satellite dish? You'll appreciate this. The member from St Catharines turns around and says, "Oh, there's all this partisan advertising in Ontario."

**Ms Pupatello:** What are you watching?

**Hon Mr Clark:** I heard the member from Windsor West making some silly comment. I just ignore her.

You know what? British Columbia was advertising about their education programs, about their health programs. Manitoba, Alberta, the federal government, Nova Scotia—right across this country, provinces are advertising all the time, sharing information with their constituents about their programs. And lo and behold, this government is not the first one to do it. Mr Peterson did it so well. I've got wonderful pictures of Jim Bradley in these wonderful full-page ads. They were partisan—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** Yeah, I know. Wonderful. But we're doing the same as every other government: reaching out to the people.

Before I give up my last 30 seconds here, I want to talk about the Canada-Ontario infrastructure, because they mentioned the federal government a couple of times over there. You know what? I've got a real problem. Here's the issue. You know this, Mr Speaker, that \$45 million has been allocated to the city of Hamilton by the Ontario government; \$31 million of it has already been allocated to specific projects. The feds are at the table for \$14 million. They cancelled their program. They were dealing with the province and the municipality on this, they were dealing with Canada-Ontario infrastructure money and the Liberals pulled the plug. They pulled the environment plug. So here's the city of Hamilton—and I know you're going to appreciate this because you're running for mayor in that community, so you know how important infrastructure is. And we do offer you great luck; I don't think we'll see support from the Liberals. But here's the situation: we have to get the money from the feds for those projects.

**Mr Crozier:** I'd like to reply to some comments made both by the member from Windsor West and the member from St Catharines, but before I do, I grossly underestimated something I said in my previous two minutes. It's not \$7,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year that this government's been spending, it's \$75,000 an hour. I know that we'd like some of those millions to be spent on home care, for example. If you've increased spending on home care, why is it I get calls at my office from needy, frail, elderly, ill people who have had their home care hours arbitrarily cut because, according to the local officials, there's just no money? Why is it that I get those calls? Don't you?

And my colleague from Windsor West mentioned nursing positions. If you're going to provide 12,000 nursing positions by 2005, if it was in the last throne speech or the throne speech before that you were going to fill 12,000 positions, why is it that you've only filled 8,000? And that's after having fired thousands at the cost of millions. Why is that? I just can't seem to understand.

And why is it that after eight years, you have to stand here and promise that there will be health care investments to reduce and eliminate waiting times, increase access to doctors and nurses and strengthen our hospitals, to cure diseases? Why haven't you been doing that for the last eight years? Why did you wait until April 30, 2003, to start doing what you should have been doing the last eight years?

**Mr Prue:** I've listened to both of the speakers from the Liberal Party, who spoke quite eloquently on some of the failings that were in the throne speech. If there was a failing in the throne speech, it definitely had to be around the area of health, whether that be public health and the public health units across this province that struggle, sometimes in very desperate circumstances, having been cut.



One has to see especially what happened in the city of Toronto. And yes, the men and women of the Toronto public health unit, particularly Dr Basrur, did an exceptional job. No one could ever take anything away from them and say that they did not do the job they were expected to do. But the reality is that their numbers are stretched thin. They are stretched thin because this province has not given enough money to the municipalities, joint money that's given with municipalities, or money that is given for special programs. Those programs that they try to do, and continue to do well, suffer immensely whenever something like the West Nile virus, whenever something like SARS, whenever something like an outbreak of tuberculosis or problems that one has in the big city occur. We saw them suffering through all of that, and we have also seen them suffering through all of this in the throne speech, where there was nothing said at all about those who live in our long-term-care facilities, those same people who have just been hit with a 5% increase this year, a 5% increase next year and a 5% increase the year after by this government, people who are frail and elderly, who have very little money. There is nothing in this budget that is going to help them or the situations in which they live or the situations where they don't have enough nurses and doctors and health care providers, and where they have been reduced to about \$4 a day for food. That is one of the major failings that I intend to speak of when it's my turn to speak of this budget and of this throne speech. I commend the Liberal Party for bringing that up.

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**The Acting Speaker:** One of the original two speakers may take up to two minutes to respond to the questions and comments made. And it will be, once you've worked it out, the member for Windsor West.

**Ms Pupatello:** Can we share that time, Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker:** No.

**Ms Pupatello:** OK. The member from St Catharines is very gracious to let me do a wrap-up to this. I just want to close this evening by saying that we were most disappointed with the throne speech. It did not talk about the auto sector. We know how critical the auto sector is to our economy, and it should have been in there. Ontario should be taking a leadership role because we used to, and it worked. Brampton is what it is today because of investments that the Ontario government has made in the auto sector. Windsor is what it is today because governments came together to make the incentives available so companies would be there and stay and grow. That is no longer the order of the day with this Ontario government, and it's high time that we call an election and be rid of them.

There were elements in this throne speech that were nothing but a repeat and a three-peat of throne speeches from the past: announcements of nurses and doctors and nurse practitioners, all of it. We've heard that story before, and they just don't materialize. Today we hear from my colleague from St Catharines of \$75,000 an hour every day, 24 hours a day; the ads on television that are

so partisan that I believe the public, every time they see an ad on television, will think, "There's money down the drain that could have been in our health system."

Our hospitals are so desperate for support, especially after the SARS outbreak in the GTA, the nursing staff that needs relief, that needs to have full-time jobs, not part-time jobs, the doctors that are under such stress because they have huge caseloads; those things should have been alleviated by this government. They had eight years to do it and nothing has happened. It's high time that we call an election. We have a different rumour every week. What I can tell you is we are ready to take our message to the people of Ontario so that we can deliver what the Ontario public needs.

**The Acting Speaker:** All right, the floor is now open for further debate.

**Mr Prue:** I understand I have about six or seven minutes here tonight, so I'm just going to start my speech and I hope to finish it later. And I see they're all leaving now, so they must be afraid of what I'm going to say.

First of all, I would like to start off with a few commendations to the members opposite for the throne speech because there were a few things in the throne speech that are worthy of commending. One of the first things was that they started off the throne speech by talking about the front-line heroes, and all members of this Legislature believe that there were heroes here in Ontario, and especially heroes in Toronto, in what happened around the SARS outbreak. We saw people who worked in the hospital who were working one and two shifts, who were working 16 hours a day to contain SARS. We saw people who put their own health at risk. We saw nurses and doctors who contracted SARS themselves and who were forced to go into isolation. We saw people who isolated their own families. We saw health care professionals at their very best.

We saw as well the board of health of the city of Toronto, the health unit of the city of Toronto take extraordinary measures, measures that we would not have ever thought to be necessary in a city like Toronto, measures that secured the health of everyone who lives in this city, measures that stopped a pandemic from happening, measures that allowed ordinary people to go about their business on the streets and feel secure that their health was in good and safe hands. If there is a true hero in this city, it is probably Dr Basrur. That woman worked extraordinarily hard and continues to work extraordinarily hard to make sure that Toronto and Canada are not a site of long-term SARS infection. In fact, places around the world are starting to commend her and her health staff, Dr Yaffe and others, for what they have done to stop the spread of SARS in Toronto. It could have been the gateway to many more infected communities both here and abroad, but it was not.

I have to say, though, having commended the government for putting that in the throne speech, I was very disappointed by the tepid response from some of the members opposite who gave it polite applause—certainly not nearly as much applause as they gave to their own

member when he walked in late, the honourable health minister, and certainly not as much applause as they gave to the announcement of OPP officers going to Iraq. It would seem quite untoward that those were the major cheering points for the members opposite rather than our hard-fighting men and women here at home.

I went on to look at the mandatory retirement provisions. There are many people who believe that this is a good thing and there are many people who think that it should be lifted. Certainly it is a human rights issue that must be addressed. I commend the members opposite for addressing what is going to be a very strong and a very heated debate here in Ontario, as it has been elsewhere. But we know that it is a human rights issue, and we know that people cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their age, even though there is presently such a provision in the Ontario Human Rights Code. The time has come to lift that, but I would caution the members opposite: even though it is a good idea to discuss that, most seniors are not willing or are not happy with the prospect of working after the age of 65. There used to be a television ad, many years ago, we saw called Freedom 55, where people planned and put their money aside so that when they were 55 they could retire in dignity to do all of the things that they wanted to do in their life: to look after their grandchildren, to pursue their hobbies, to travel the world. People want to do that in retirement. Most people look forward to the age of 65 as a realistic opportunity to do exactly that.

What this is saying, in effect, is that they have the authority of law to work beyond the age of 65. I certainly have no difficulty if that is their desire, but most people would prefer that this government brought in better

legislation when it came to pensions so that their pensions were indexed, so that their pensions were portable. That's really what should have been brought here. That should have been brought here as the centre-piece, after which the freedom to work could be there, so that people could have a realistic choice. Right now, all that is being done is to force people to work after the age of 65 when many of them don't wish to do it but do not have the economic ability to retire when most of us consider that it's quite normal and when people should be pursuing other goals in their lives.

I commend the government for finally waking up to the issue of disabilities. I have sat here in this Legislature for about a year and a half and I have heard many debates around the disabled in this province. I heard my good friend Mr Martin, the member from Sault Ste Marie, stand up with his private member's bill asking something—what I thought was ordinary and just and right, and that is to index the ODSP pensions. I saw the members opposite vote against it, one by one by one. I don't know what is in this legislation, because it just says it's going to be reviewed, but I would hope that you go beyond reviewing and giving a \$5 increment and go all the way to what Mr Martin was suggesting, and that is to index that pension after having raised it nine years' worth, all at once. That is what we are looking forward to.

I think it must be close to 9:30 and I'm going to wrap up now. I will continue when my turn comes again.

**The Acting Speaker:** Bang on the money. It now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 2130.*



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**Tuesday 6 May 2003**

**Mardi 6 mai 2003**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** My community is tired of the pathetic game of political chess the Minister of Health and the government are playing with regard to the Sudbury Regional Hospital and its financial woes. It's time for your manoeuvring to stop, and it's time for you to call checkmate and send the cheque to Sudbury.

Our community has done everything this government has asked it to do. You asked us to raise \$17.5 million over five years; we raised \$23.6 million over three years, thanks to the hard work of Gerry Loughheed Jr, the Heart and Soul Campaign, and a giving community of Sudbury in northeastern Ontario.

What is your record? You've got a project that's gone from \$88 million to \$363 million. Capital construction stopped two years ago and hasn't started up. We have a community uncertain about its health care future because of your inaction. We have a hospital supervisor appointed by you who is waiting for you to take action.

Today, on behalf of the constituents of Sudbury, on behalf of the people in Nickel Belt, on behalf of the people of northeastern Ontario, we demand that you send the cheque and get the project onboard again. We need our hospital.

#### ROTHERGLEN SCHOOL

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** I take this moment to congratulate the Ottawa Senators and their winning the Eastern semi-finals. It certainly sets up the opportunity for an all-Canadian Stanley Cup, something that has for far too long been absent from this country.

On another completely different topic, during the recess, back in the depths of a very snowy March, I had the opportunity to speak to grade 5 students and teachers at Rotherglen School in Oakville. Teachers Jean Lem, Don Otto, and Julie Enyedi-Peric took their classes to Queen's Park a few weeks after I had chatted with their students at their school.

These students asked some very impressive questions, showing a remarkable understanding of local issues and a keen interest in the political process. It certainly reflects well on the process that has taken place and how well

these children learn. Questions ranged from the details of an MPP's job and the election process through to local, provincial and indeed federal issues. Talking with young people provides an interesting and enlightening window on our educational system. Students' questions reflected the high quality of education provided at this private facility.

Schools like Rotherglen, with its program firmly rooted in Montessori principles, provide a choice for parents and a competition between educators that can only benefit Ontario's students. Rotherglen School operates at six campuses in Oakville, Mississauga and Burlington, with students enrolled in pre-school through grade 8.

#### NORTHERN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** With Premier Eves heading to Thunder Bay tomorrow for a fundraising event, I want to use this opportunity today to call on him to spend at least part of his time in my community dealing with some major transportation improvements that have been needed for several years and which so far have, sadly, been brushed aside by the Tory government.

Certainly the expansion of our highway system in northwestern Ontario, specifically the four-laning of the Trans-Canada where no alternate route exists, cannot be ignored any longer. Even your own Smart Growth panel, Premier, which formally presented its recommendations last week, views four-laning as a vital priority from both a public safety and an economic point of view.

A real commitment to such a project is needed, but two other major projects demand your attention as well. The construction of the Shabakwa Expressway is long overdue. The project has been ready to go for several years and will make an enormous difference to the movement of vehicles, particularly transports, through our community. It will alleviate serious problems on Arthur Street and Dawson Road, and for some time has been the top priority for Thunder Bay city council.

Another relatively inexpensive project that would markedly improve public safety on the Thunder Bay Expressway is our long-standing call for a full set of advance warning lights. Recently, Thunder Bay police chief Bob Herman spoke out publicly on the need for such a system and expressed his amazement that this obvious safety improvement was still not being supported by the government.

Premier, surely you would agree that if we can save even one life by installing these warning lights, it would be well worth it. You will have the opportunity on Wednesday to correct years of neglect related to highway improvements in our region. Please, for the sake of public safety, do not let this opportunity pass.

#### PLANIT MEASURING CO

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** I'm very pleased to recognize the pioneering achievements of the PlanIt Measuring Co Inc, a high-technology engineering firm in my riding. PlanIt won the Toronto Construction Association's 2002 Innovative Product/Technology Award for its exciting invention, the Measuring Board. This new product delivers real-time digital floor plans that can be combined with virtual tours of residential and commercial real estate. It also received National Research Council support.

The Measuring Board is an engineering integration of a laser measuring tool, a computer-assisted design (CAD) program and the new Scribbler tablet computer produced by Electrovaya, another groundbreaking company in my riding. Electrovaya won a 2001 Ontario Global Traders Regional Award for innovation.

The Measuring Board is such an accurate measuring tool that some commercial office owners discover over 2% more rentable space. As well, because the Measuring Board is a CAD file, architects and designers can use it as a basis for renovations and home improvements. The Measuring Board was launched in Canada and France last year, and the company has a patent pending in the United States.

I would ask members to join me in congratulating Mike Laurie, the company's visionary president and CEO. Mr Laurie, a professional engineer who graduated from Lorne Park Secondary School in my riding, jointly founded PlanIt with his wife, Odette, in 1994.

I wish PlanIt every success as the company expands worldwide and revolutionizes the real estate world. We are extremely proud of you, Mike Laurie.

#### ADAMS MINE

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane):** In September 2002, the Adams mine dump site was sold to a numbered company for \$1.8 million. Soon after, this company began negotiating with the Eves government to purchase over 2,000 acres of crown land that are needed to make this dump deal a reality.

This purchase is being done in secret and without due process for the shockingly low price of \$22 per acre. My constituents have been outraged by these secret negotiations. Hundreds of letters, phone calls and e-mails objecting to the sale of this crown land have been ignored by this government.

I believe the government is trying to rush this fire sale through as a political payoff to powerful land developers involved in the Oak Ridges moraine travesty, who also

happen to be large Conservative Party donors and tied to a sitting Tory MPP. These Tory insiders are actively campaigning to use the groundwater of Timiskaming as a dumping ground for Toronto waterfront contaminated soils and for urban waste from across the province. To make this deal possible, the government is offering another fire sale: the selling off of the Ontario Northland Railway to Adams mine dump partner Canadian National Railways.

To show you how cynical the people in the north are concerning the government's abuse of public trust, a newspaper poll in Timiskaming is about to be released stating that 94% of residents believe that this government is working on a secret backroom deal to revive the Adams mine garbage deal.

Walkerton proved the need to protect groundwater and Smart Growth declared the need for watershed protection, yet this government is willing to trade the groundwater of Timiskaming as a political payoff to its pals.

#### AMBULANCE SERVICES

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** I rise in my place today to bring to the attention of the government and the public an existing and growing crisis that exists within the area of public safety. I'm talking about the ambulance dispatchers. Many government members should know that, right now, we only have a retention rate of 30% of new ambulance dispatchers. What's happening is, people are being hired by the Ministry of Health and are being trained, but because of the poor wages and the wage differential—and I'm talking \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year now—what happens is once the Ministry of Health has trained these dispatchers, they then move on to the fire or police world, where dispatchers are paid what they're worth.

What's happening is that where the guidelines, your guidelines, say there should be a two-minute response, because we're so short-staffed in a lot of these dispatch centres, it's taking up to six minutes. We have people working in the dispatch centres who are having to have their own emergency personnel come to their workplace because these workers are dropping because of the pressure and the stress. We have people who are answering 911 phone calls who have been on the job anywhere from 16 to 24 hours. That's a recipe for disaster. In fact, OPSEU has examples where people's lives have been at risk. In one case, they believe it directly attributed to the shortage of staff.

You have the power to do something. Use that power. Save Ontario lives.

1340

#### CELT FEST

**Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing):** Today I rise before the House to personally invite everyone to northern Ontario's only Scottish celebration and Highland festival, Celtfest 2003, in beautiful Callander, Ontario. In its three



years, Celtfest has brought international attention to the town of Callander.

I'm happy to announce that one of Scotland's best-selling authors, David Ross, will be participating in the Celtfest activities. David is well known as being the leading authority on Braveheart, Scotland's national hero, William Wallace.

Celtfest is also recognized as an important stop on the Scottish games circuit. Other participants in this year's Celtfest games will be none other than Canada's own Guinness Book of World Records holder Kevin Fast, who holds the record for the heaviest truck pulled over 100 feet, as well as local competitors the Wand brothers of Powassan.

Some of the events at this year's Celtfest will include the Highland and step dance competition, piping and drumming competitions and, new to this year's event, sheepdog herding. The Metro Toronto police pipe band will be performing in concert. The event organizers are anticipating the biggest battle of the bands in northern Ontario.

I'd like to congratulate and thank Celtfest organizer Tom Mason, founder Colleen Porter, as well as all the volunteers who make this festival a great attraction.

For further information, you can visit [www.celtfest.org](http://www.celtfest.org) or phone 705-752-2112. I invite everyone in the province of Ontario to Celtfest on May 16 and 17.

### SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** The Dream Team is in the House. I want members opposite and here to join with me in welcoming a group of consumer/survivors, their families and community members who advocate for more supportive housing and for dignity for the mentally ill.

I have my own leader of the Dream Team, Neil McQuaid. Neil McQuaid is a resident of St Jude Community Homes in my riding. Last year I had the opportunity to honour him with the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal because Neil McQuaid stands out to our society as a model for what can be achieved when we offer people appropriate supportive housing in their communities. He, like these other people, has gone from a point where they were regularly institutionalized, where they were frequent flyers in our medical system, to becoming a contributing member of our society again.

Their message to you and to all of us today is that if we want to meaningfully deal with the challenges we see in front of us on our streets, it's not enough to talk as some members of the government party do about sweeping them up, arresting them and putting them in jail. It's to talk about the need to build supportive housing.

Today I bring these people to the Legislature, and they bring their story to the Legislature. It's a story that says when government makes the necessary investments in supportive housing, individuals whom we all know have an opportunity to restore their capacity to be full-fledged,

contributing, committed members of our society. That's the message of the Dream Team. It's a message that two parties in this Legislature have got, because there are serious commitments in their platforms to building more supportive housing, and we'd encourage the government to do so.

When the Premier arrives, we'll send these cards across to him as further encouragement from the Dream Team to get behind the need to build more supportive housing.

### KINGSWAY COLLEGE

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Last Saturday, May 3, I had the privilege of attending a very meaningful and moving event, the 100th anniversary of Kingsway College in Oshawa. Kingsway College is a Seventh-day Adventist high school in my riding that encourages personal spiritual commitment and fosters academic excellence. It also focuses on physical fitness, music, service to others, growth in employment and social skills.

Kingsway College has undergone several changes of name over the years; however, its emphasis on service and academic excellence has been constant. When it opened in 1903, with just eight students, it was known as Lornedale Academy, located in Lorne Park, Ontario. It moved to larger premises in Oshawa in 1912 and it has remained at its present location in east Oshawa ever since. Recent milestones have included the construction of the A.E. King Memorial Fitness Complex in 1980, the largest facility of its kind in Durham region. Today the school has close to 200 students enrolled from grades 9 to 12.

I'd like to congratulate principal John Janes, senior pastor Dr Douglas Devnich, guest speaker Gordon Pifher, the alumni chorus under the direction of Dr James Bingham, and indeed all those who participated in a very memorable Sabbath service of worship and celebration on May 3. This literally was a homecoming with a spiritual impact, including a walking tour of the grounds and an opportunity to reminisce.

Congratulations once again to students, staff, alumni and friends who contributed to the success of Kingsway College, 100 years with a motto of "Service not fame."

### VISITORS

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** It gives me great pleasure today to welcome in the member's gallery the honourable Professor Dalbari Lal, ex-Speaker of the legislative assembly and now Deputy Minister of Education, Punjab state, India, and other prominent members of the Indian community.

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** I would like the members in the House to recognize the man whom I was speaking about in my statement this afternoon, Mr Michael Laurie, the designer of the PlanIt measuring tool, which is the Measuring Board. He's a young man, the kind of person that we need in this prov-

ince, who designed something, marketed something and will hopefully have a world patent. He's just the kind of Ontarian that the future holds for all of us—Mr Mike Laurie.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD CONSUMER PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA RÉGIE DE LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Baird moved first reading of the following bill :

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les concessions municipales en ce qui a trait à la protection des consommateurs, à la régie de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à d'autres questions.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Bisson, Gilles  
Churley, Marilyn  
Hampton, Howard

Kormos, Peter  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony  
Prue, Michael

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 76; the nays are 8.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

The minister for a short statement?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** We defer to ministerial statements.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** On October 7, 2002, the Premier ordered a review of the Ontario Energy Board. I committed to conduct that review and report back to cabinet within 100 days.

Our consultation process was extensive. We posted a consultation paper on our Web site and sent out more than 1,500 letters to MPPs, stakeholders, consumer groups and municipalities. We received 78 written submissions, and I personally met with more than 25 different groups.

The government heard from the people of Ontario. We heard their suggestions, their concerns and their points of view. We heard about the need to focus more attention on consumer protection. I'm proud to say that the legislation being introduced today has incorporated many of the ideas that were brought forward.

The government's proposed legislation would greatly improve and strengthen the Ontario Energy Board. If we are to have a strong energy market, we need a board that is not only strong but diligent, independent and well resourced.

Since the Ontario Energy Board was established more than 40 years ago, it has expanded, it has evolved, and it has endured changing times and changing circumstances. The board has talented and dedicated people, but it has not been given the opportunity to modernize and its mandate has not grown as quickly as it could have or should have.

I believe the legislative initiatives being proposed today would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ontario Energy Board. They would improve govern-

#### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic  
Arnott, Ted  
Baird, John R.  
Barrett, Toby  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Beaubien, Marcel  
Bountrogianni, Marie  
Boyer, Claudette  
Bryant, Michael  
Caplan, David  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Clark, Brad  
Cleary, John C.  
Clement, Tony  
Coburn, Brian  
Colle, Mike  
Crozier, Bruce  
Cunningham, Dianne  
Curling, Alvin  
DeFaria, Carl  
Di Cocco, Caroline  
Dombrowsky, Leona  
Ecker, Janet  
Elliott, Brenda  
Eves, Ernie  
Flaherty, Jim

Galt, Doug  
Gerretsen, John  
Gilchrist, Steve  
Gill, Raminder  
Gravelle, Michael  
Guzzo, Garry J.  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hoy, Pat  
Jackson, Cameron  
Johns, Helen  
Johnson, Bert  
Klees, Frank  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Levac, David  
Marland, Margaret  
Martiniuk, Gerry  
Maves, Bart  
Mazzilli, Frank  
McDonald, AL  
McMeekin, Ted  
Miller, Norm  
Molinari, Tina R.  
Munro, Julia  
Murdoch, Bill  
Newman, Dan

O'Toole, John  
Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Parsons, Ernie  
Patten, Richard  
Peters, Steve  
Phillips, Gerry  
Pupatello, Sandra  
Ramsay, David  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Sampson, Rob  
Sergio, Mario  
Smitherman, George  
Sorbara, Greg  
Spina, Joseph  
Sterling, Norman W.  
Stewart, R. Gary  
Stockwell, Chris  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Tsubouchi, David H.  
Turnbull, David  
Wilson, Jim  
Wood, Bob  
Young, David



ance and accountability, while ensuring that consumer protection remains paramount.

Je crois que la loi proposée aujourd'hui permettrait d'améliorer l'efficacité de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario. Les réformes que contient cette loi renforceront la régie et la responsabilité de la commission et mettront plus que jamais l'accent sur la protection des consommateurs.

The legislation contains the following measures. If passed by the Legislature, the board would be self-financing and secure the ability to provide compensation that is competitive within the existing marketplace. This would lead to more effective decision-making and a better operating climate.

1400

We are proposing to establish a management committee comprised of the chair and two vice-chairs. The committee would oversee the board's performance, its resource needs and its fee structure. This is significant because the committee would deal with the immediate administrative duties of the board, allowing the other members to focus their full attention on hearings. This proposed legislation would set board terms for an initial two-year period, with renewal terms of up to five years. Full-time board members would be eligible to receive pay-for-performance based on the delivery of the board's business plan. Compensation would not relate specifically to the members' respective adjudicative responsibilities.

As well, this legislation, if passed, would establish an advisory committee of stakeholders, industry representatives and of consumers to review the board's performance measures. We further propose that the board would now be required to establish an annual regulatory calendar with a statement of priorities, thus increasing accountability and ensuring that stringent timelines aren't just established but met.

Through the proposed legislation, board members would be allowed to delegate decision-making responsibility to officials. This would help speed up the decision-making process. It is important to note that these decisions could still be appealed to the board, if necessary. It is vital that we streamline the hearing process while ensuring that consumers have an opportunity for input. We are proposing to develop criteria for consumer protection support that may include grouping together interested parties. The criteria would be established by the Ontario Energy Board management committee, in consultation with the advisory committee that I mentioned earlier. We propose to harmonize the powers of the Ontario Energy Board to eliminate duplication and streamline the regulation of natural gas and electricity.

Finally, this legislation addresses the issue of retroactive decisions. This has been an area of significant public interest. If passed, this legislation would ensure that the board makes decisions within meaningful time frames. Having to pay retroactive amounts is difficult for consumers, and this legislation would effectively eliminate retroactive charges that sit and accumulate month after month.

This legislation proposes that the recovery of any charges occur in the future by reviewing them more frequently and rolling them into future rates for a short period of time. Board decisions should be equitable, they should be clear, and they should be consistent. Investors in Ontario must know that they are entitled to both recover their costs and to earn a fair rate of return.

People must be properly informed and updated on the OEB's decisions and activities. I believe that it's the responsibility of the board to communicate effectively, to tell people what they're doing and why. The board's decisions can have far-reaching implications. For that reason the board's communications role would be enhanced and improved through this legislation. Timely information and pertinent data are critical to allow people an opportunity to better plan for themselves and their organizations. The people of Ontario have told us they want increased consumer protection. I believe this legislation would not only protect consumers even further, but help to improve efficiency, accountability and resources at the board.

As I've said on a number of occasions, I was impressed with the changes that were made at the Ontario Securities Commission. It wasn't change for the sake of change; it was change that led to a stronger, more effective operation. With our new legislation, we're proposing to adopt many of the aspects of the OSC model. The reforms I have outlined today are of extreme importance to everyone in the province because energy is not a luxury; it's the lifeblood of both our economy and indeed our entire society.

Les réformes que j'ai présentées aujourd'hui sont d'une importance capitale pour l'ensemble de la province. L'énergie n'est pas un luxe. Au contraire, l'énergie est absolument essentielle au fonctionnement de l'économie et de notre société. Cette loi, comme les autres lois que nous avons présentées dans le passé, est nécessaire pour protéger les consommateurs et pour répondre à nos besoins dans le futur.

This legislation, like previous legislation brought before this House, is necessary in order to protect consumers and meet their future needs.

Let me again convey my pride that the government is introducing this legislation after hearing from Ontarians. To those who submitted their ideas, either in person or in writing, I want to thank you for your time, your effort and your energy.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the Honourable Howard Wetston, the proposed new chair of the Ontario Energy Board. Mr. Wetston is an outstanding individual. He was former head of the Competition Bureau at the federal government, he was a former Federal Court of Canada judge, and he served with great distinction as the vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. His appointment will be reviewed by a legislative committee tomorrow. I think that any member, seeing his outstanding, non-partisan qualifications would agree that this outstanding public servant will make an

incredible difference in the lives of both enterprise and individuals in Ontario.

### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security):** This week is Emergency Preparedness Week and the theme is "Prepare now! Learn how!" I'd like to take this opportunity to remind the House of some of the actions this government has taken to ensure both the safety and security of Ontarians.

I want to pay tribute to the hundreds of people who have responded so heroically to the SARS health emergency. SARS is the first province-wide emergency faced by this province. Our Commissioner of Public Security, Dr Jim Young, always says that each emergency is unique and requires a unique response, but we can learn from each emergency in order to be better prepared in the future.

There are many kinds of emergencies, including ones caused by nature, such as the ice storm of 1998. There are accidents, such as the Mississauga train derailment, and there are disasters, such as the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. An emergency can be anything from a flood to a forest fire to a new virus. Each situation is unique and each one has one thing in common: the capable and determined response of individuals.

Many of us saw this first-hand in 1998 during the ice storm. I was born and raised in eastern Ontario and knew the resilience and fortitude of its people, but I was amazed to see their strength in adversity and the generosity of the entire province and beyond.

September 11 was a wake-up call. Before that we thought mainly in terms of natural disasters and accidents. But, frankly, most people didn't think that anyone could be so evil as to purposely set out to destroy thousands of innocent lives, or that the destruction would hit so close to home. I had the opportunity to see first-hand the devastation the terrorists caused in New York City, as well as to meet a number of victims' family members and some of the front-line workers who led the response.

During each emergency we saw first-hand the dedication and professionalism of our emergency response teams. But courage, professionalism and downright intestinal fortitude aren't enough. You have to be prepared. That's why this government has worked so hard to improve the province's ability to respond to emergencies of all kinds.

One of the ways was to amalgamate the former Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services into the Ministry of Public Safety and Security. That was done in order to better meet the challenges of a changed world, a world in which global terror is a significant threat and coordinated public security is in the forefront of many people's minds. The ice storm and September 11 also led this government to introduce and pass the Emergency Readiness Act, which

requires all municipalities to have emergency plans and to train their staff in the best ways to respond to emergencies.

We're investing \$30 million a year to increase Ontario's ability to protect itself and respond to emergencies. Thanks to this investment, we have seen the doubling of staff at Emergency Management Ontario, the establishment of a round-the-clock provincial operations centre, as well as a backup centre. We have also seen the founding of Community Emergency Response Volunteers Ontario, or CERV Ontario. This is a made-in-Ontario program that will see a province-wide network of neighbourhood-based, multi-functional teams of volunteers trained in basic emergency management principles and skills. They will act as support to our front-line professionals in the event of an emergency.

We named Dr Jim Young, one of Ontario's most capable public servants, as the Commissioner of Public Security.

We established a security council of experts in emergency management and terrorism, under the chairmanship of Dr Young. The council consists of retired Major-General Lewis MacKenzie; former RCMP Commissioner Norman Inkster; Dr Colin D'Cunha, Ontario's Commissioner of Public Health; and Scott Newark, former executive officer of the Canadian Police Association and current vice-chair of the Office for Victims of Crime and special counsel.

Just yesterday, the Premier made policing history in Ontario when he announced that Ontario will add 1,000 new police officers to our front lines. This brings a total of 2,000 new officers that this government has committed to putting on the streets and highways of Ontario since 1995. That's more than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

### 1410

The SARS emergency demonstrated that although, as Dr Young says, each emergency is unique, we can apply past lessons to present circumstances. We activated the provincial emergency operations centre, bringing together experts from a number of ministries to work together in a co-ordinated and effective manner. The fight against SARS has been a truly collaborative effort, led by the Commissioner of Public Security, Dr Young, and the Commissioner of Public Health, Dr D'Cunha. These two provincial offices, working alongside Toronto public health and health care workers in facilities across Ontario, have effectively contained the spread of SARS in Ontario.

This government also moved to provide job protection for those people who could not go to work and were required to stay at home or in isolation due to exposure to SARS. The SARS response act prevents employers from firing employees who were in quarantine or isolation and not able to work due to exposure to SARS.

The government is doing everything it can to make Ontario a safer, more secure place to live, work and raise a family. Emergency Preparedness Week is an opportunity for all Ontarians to learn about what they can do personally to improve their own and their family's safety.



I encourage everyone to check the Ministry of Public Safety and Security's Web site to see how they can prepare for the unexpected. This is truly a time when we can all learn how to prepare now.

#### ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD

**Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's):** I say to the Minister of Energy, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have been calling for reforms to the Ontario Energy Board, so we are going to look closely at this legislation, which we have not had an opportunity to look at to date. I can tell you right off the top, though, I did turn to page 1. We believe that the number one objective of the Ontario Energy Board at present under the legislation is clear. The number one objective of the Ontario Energy Board is—and we think this is wrong—to serve and protect the electricity industry. We on this side of the House believe that the number one objective of the Ontario Energy Board rather ought to be to serve and protect the consumers of Ontario.

I say to the government, I truly believe that the electricity industry also would agree with that. If we do not have a strong Ontario Energy Board, we will have a situation where, as the chair of the National Energy Board said this week in a speech, you will get huge consumer price spikes, which in turn will transform into a huge consumer backlash and a public backlash that results in the entire industry being turned on its ear. That's not in the interests of the industry, that's not in the public interest, and that's certainly not in the interests of consumers.

We need an Ontario Energy Board which in fact reflects the huge responsibilities that it presently has. The OEB used to be a gas regulator and then it suddenly was to become an electricity regulator as well. Yet it wasn't given the tools and the resources to address these huge new responsibilities, so instead of undertaking these reforms years ago before the electricity reforms were undertaken by this government, we're getting this legislation now.

We need not only these legislative reforms, we also obviously need the tools and the resources. Perhaps the self-financing model is the way to do it, but we've got a long way to go when the Ontario Energy Board is about a third of the size of the OSC, if the OSC is in fact our model. Obviously, in order for the game to work, we have to have enough officials and the right officials on the ice. If we don't, the game won't work and everybody suffers. This government has learned that lesson when it comes to the electricity regulation marketplace the hard way.

There is some concern, I think, I say to the Minister of Energy, in terms of overlap between the mandate of the Ontario Energy Board and the independent market operator that needs to be addressed. We have a great concern that this is just going to be a reform undertaken in isolation. We do not want that to happen because unless we address all the problems going on in Ontario energy, particularly what's going on in Pickering—we

were supposed to get answers on that, but we have not to date—this in fact may be a step backward instead of a step forward.

I say in closing—it must be said: this bill is an admission of failure by this government. It is in fact something that should have been introduced years ago. In that sense, too little, too late.

#### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** It is a privilege to rise on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus to respond to the minister's statement on Emergency Preparedness Week and the theme, "Prepare now and learn how." He wanted to take an opportunity to talk about what their government does. I wanted to take an opportunity to express my sympathy to the minister for having the Premier and the Minister of Finance cut his budget by \$181 million. I feel badly for him.

By the same token, the minister refers to the ice storm of 1998. Can he explain to us why the ministry sat on the report until April one year later, when we learned about municipalities that were not prepared? Ninety per cent had a plan, but less than 70% had even practised it because they didn't get any money from the government to try to put these practices in place. That's not emergency preparedness. Unfortunately, he didn't have a plan then.

He says now that September 11 is a wake-up call. Let's talk about that wake-up call. That wake-up call was responded to immediately by my leader Dalton McGuinty, who offered us the Ontario security fund. Half of the fund would have been \$50 million—not \$30 million—available to municipalities to update their plans and response and to train people. So that was quick thinking. That was leadership to help our community instantly.

Let's talk about our growing communities platform initiated a year ago, with 1,000 new police officers in the province of Ontario. But let's also make sure you understand this: we are going to also include 100 probation and parole officers of a new hire. That would keep our community safer and secure if he were to do that.

The minister also made references to something else that I brought to this House's attention. He established the security council with experts in terrorism. What we suggested and what I suggested was, why don't you look at architects and construction workers, work with labour, so that when we build our buildings they're done and made safer. We expect better action from this government in the future.

#### ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** In response to the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Energy wants people across Ontario to believe that he's actually doing something today about the degree to which consumers have been ripped off and taken advantage of. I want people to clearly understand what

this is really all about. What the minister is attempting to do is add a little sugar coating to the bitter pill of hydro privatization and deregulation. For that reason, I'm not surprised that the Liberals are voting with him to support him and that the Liberals stand in support of this bill.

I want to speak a bit from the perspective of the people of Wawa. I'm surprised the member for Algoma-Manitoulin isn't on his feet protesting this, because under your scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation, the good people of Wawa have no less than five hydro electricity generating dams within about eight kilometres of the municipality. Those hydro-generating dams generate electricity at about half a cent a kilowatt hour. There are no transmission lines to deliver that electricity to the community; it's so close. The distribution lines have been there for years, yet under hydro privatization and deregulation, do the people of Wawa effectively pay 50 cents a kilowatt hour for that electricity? Do they pay half a cent a kilowatt hour? Do they pay three cents? Do they pay seven cents? No. When you work out the math, they are effectively paying what amounts to 11 cents a kilowatt hour to have that electricity delivered five kilometres to their door. They're paying 22 times what it costs to generate it only five kilometres away.

This government and these Liberals think that's OK. You think that's acceptable. You think it's acceptable when the people who work at the sawmill are laid off from their jobs. You think it's acceptable when one of the only two food stores in the town closes down. You think it's acceptable when someone who owns a small apartment building gets a \$10,000 electricity bill.

Going a little further afield, in Timmins this summer Falconbridge is going to lay off 300 workers at their refinery for three months. Why? Because they can't afford to pay the excessive cost of privatized, deregulated electricity.

What is the Minister of Energy in this government going to do about it and what are the Liberals going to support? They're going to support this excuse for legislation, which will do nothing for the hydro consumers in Wawa, nothing for the people who are going to be laid off from their jobs in Timmins, nothing for those people who continue to see their hydro bills escalate despite the phony rate caps. It will do nothing for those people here in Toronto or Guelph or Burlington who are going to see dirty diesel generators in their communities this summer because the private sector hasn't built any new supply, and they won't build new supply unless the government allows the price of electricity to go even higher and higher.

I say to the Minister of Energy, shame on you for promoting this sham and I say to Liberals, shame on you for supporting it.

1420

#### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** For the Minister of Public Security to talk about emergency pre-

paredness and his Conservative government in the same sentence is the penultimate oxymoron. This government can promise more cops, but until it delivers them, they are nothing but shallow promises. A thousand new cops, my foot. It'll be the same as it was before, and any new police officers will simply be replacing the rolls of retired police officers. The fact is that you've downloaded so many costs on to communities like regional Niagara, like every other community in this province, that they can't afford to hire adequate policing, they can't afford to have adequate staffing in their police forces.

You want to talk about emergency preparedness? Talk about ensuring that there's adequate funding and resources for municipalities to ensure minimum staffing for firefighting services. You've abandoned firefighters just like you've abandoned cops in Ontario.

Only yesterday ambulance dispatchers were here at Queen's Park warning you about the incredible crisis, the risk of loss of life. I say to you that lives will be lost until you attend to the needs of ambulance dispatchers promptly. The disparity in wages by ambulance dispatchers, members of OPSEU, from dispatchers in other sectors is so extreme that there's but a 30% retention rate in new hires. Ambulance dispatchers are working 16- and 24-hour days. People are going to die in this province. It's because of this government, and I tell you, you'd better accept that responsibility, because others are imposing it on you.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask the House for unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 7, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. It would end the discrimination against the Great Lakes Power area customers.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

#### HEPATITIS C

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm seeking unanimous consent, with the concurrence of the other two parties, to have an up to five minutes per side discussion on hepatitis C, statements on hepatitis C.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I rise in the House today to raise awareness of hepatitis C. This disease is a significant public health concern and I join with Ontario's health care providers in urging Ontarians to learn more about hepatitis C so they can combat its effects and prevent its transmission.

Hepatitis C, if left untreated, can cause serious liver damage and even cancer. While it can be fatal for most sufferers, it is also debilitating, with symptoms including extreme fatigue, confusion, abdominal pain and depression. Unlike other forms of hepatitis, there is no vaccine against hepatitis C, but antiviral drugs are an increasingly effective form of treatment. These drugs can



now treat about half of all patients. For those patients who do not respond to the antiviral drugs, liver transplantation can be a life-saving procedure.

Those most at risk are people who received blood transfusions prior to the onset of screening for the virus in 1990, people exposed to contaminated needles through tattooing, acupuncture and drug use, and health care workers. It's estimated that up to 2% of the Canadian population carries the hepatitis C virus. However, nearly half of these people are not yet aware of their infection. In Ontario, we have identified about 60,000 people who are infected with hepatitis C, but there are many more people who still do not know that they have it.

Hepatitis C sufferers represent a wide cross-section of society, but individuals with blood disorders form an important subgroup of all victims. For example, because hemophiliacs require more frequent access to blood and blood products, the majority of individuals with this blood disorder were infected through the blood system prior to 1990.

Ontario remains committed to ensuring that everyone who was infected through the blood system in this province is treated fairly, regardless of when the infection occurred. That's why Ontario launched the Ontario hepatitis C assistance plan in November 1998, which provides \$25,000 in compassionate assistance to individuals who were not covered by the federal-provincial-territorial hepatitis C settlement plan. I'm proud to say that no other province provides this level of financial assistance to the pre-1986 and post-1990 victims.

Over the next several years, medical experts anticipate a dramatic increase in the number of hepatitis C sufferers requiring health care services. In addition to providing compensation, Ontario is committed to ensuring that all blood victims have reasonable access to quality treatment and care. To meet this goal, we established an expert panel, the hepatitis C advisory committee, to determine what health care system enhancements will be required to accomplish this goal.

I remain proud of our government's actions to help those people afflicted with this terrible disease now and in the future.

**Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** This month is hep C awareness month. We know that hep C is a viral blood infection that can lead to liver failure. Many of us know people who have contracted hepatitis C. We understand, in the way they live, that sometimes they feel well and sometimes they feel terrible. We know that sometimes they're able to work, and often they just can't work. We know that, even according to Bill Buckels, the head of HepACT, who's lived with hep C for over 30 years, there is a way to manage this infection. There is a way to manage and live with hep C.

What help does the government have available, and what role should the government play in making that kind of disease manageable? We know that across the country 275,000 Canadians are infected with this blood-borne disease, and 70% of those are unaware and could well be contracting it to others.

Even though modern screening techniques have virtually eliminated the risk of contraction through tainted blood, education and awareness are still essential to curbing the spread of the disease and putting others at risk.

Upwards of 20% of Canadians afflicted with hep C develop cirrhosis of the liver, and between 1% and 5% of those will develop liver cancer. There are many Canadians who live with hep C and don't meet treatment criteria, and suffer, therefore, because they can't get the best treatments available. Others don't respond to treatment and have to wait for something new to come along, and that's slow in coming. Without intervention, the death toll from hep C is expected to triple by the year 2010. This can only be stemmed through increased public awareness and primary care physician utilization of hep C tests. There is currently no broad-based testing for hepatitis in Ontario, and the number of infected persons is rising dramatically, especially among seniors, many of whom are unaware that they are even infected.

That brings us to how to manage hepatitis C. Primary care is essential for these individuals across Ontario who have to have ongoing care by physicians who are experts in dealing with hepatitis C. There are people across Ontario who live with hep C with no hepatologist working for them. If you live in parts of Ontario with severe doctor shortages and even more severe specialist shortages, as in Windsor, where we don't have a hepatologist, I can tell you very sad stories about people with hep C in my own riding and in many other parts of Ontario who wait up to six to eight months to get an appointment with a specialist in Toronto. One of my constituents has been waiting eight months for an appointment in Toronto, not even receiving so much as a call to set up the appointment. Meanwhile, the damage to her organs continues.

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It can't be stressed enough that funds need to be set aside for early detection and treatment. But in all other aspects of health policy in this province, the most basic of those is primary care, the very basics of having a family doctor to attend to you and to see that ongoing care continues. Even if you're put on a treatment program with a specialist, even if that specialist is in another city, you have to have that continuing care in your own community. This is essential for everybody, but especially for those who are combatting hepatitis C.

All of us now in this House must have met these individuals to understand that we owe them the very basics of care—let alone that we live in the richest province in the richest country in the world. Can we not offer these individuals who suffer with hep C that they can live very great lives and can be contributors to society? We owe them the basics. In some cases that means a family doctor and, in many cases, a specialist who can deal with hepatitis C.

I don't think we ask very much. In this, Hepatitis C Awareness Month, can we not get this government to go back to the basics and provide us with family doctors across the board, with specialists who are happy to work in this province? Never mind the innovation that they

create on their own; we just have to put people in place in personnel positions in the health system to get them to work for our public.

Let me say out of interest that HepCURE Canada, which works year-round for hep C patients, called the Minister of Health's office for certificates of recognition in honour of Hepatitis C Month. The ministry said no. Here are some really basic things about people who work for hep C patients who want just that little bit of recognition. I would urge the minister to reconsider his policy—that when it comes to us, celebrating the work of staff and volunteers, like we are today, who follow hepatitis C patients diligently year-round, I think we can do something as basic as offering certificates of recognition.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Close to 250,000 Canadians are infected with hepatitis C, and thousands of those live in Ontario. In fact, Ontario has the highest number of infected in all of Canada. Many will die of liver failure waiting for liver transplants. Others will spread the infection back to the community without knowing it, or they'll suffer for years, and so will their friends, families and co-workers, waiting for a better treatment to be approved. Current treatments are not 100% effective. Still others won't be found in time to prevent the damage of years of attack by the hepatitis C virus.

Ontarians who live with hepatitis C need our support and recognition of this terrible disease. They need to know that, through awareness, this is a disease that can be prevented. That was why a letter was sent to Premier Eves and Health Minister Tony Clement on March 4 specifically requesting that the Ontario government issue a proclamation: first, that the month of May 2003 would be recognized as Hepatitis C Month, and second, that May 1 specifically would be designated as Hepatitis C Awareness Day. In fact, in the letter that was sent to the Premier, with a copy to the Minister of Health, there were two potential proclamations that this government could use: one from the province of British Columbia and one from the province of Manitoba, which both issued proclamations last year. We know that other provinces were lining up to actually issue proclamations. Newfoundland and Labrador did this on April 4; Nova Scotia and New Brunswick did this even before that. PEI was due to issue a proclamation the week of April 4; Yukon already had. Manitoba and British Columbia were due to issue theirs as well the week of April 4.

By April 6, because the government still hadn't responded to this particular request, all of us in this assembly received a letter from Bill Buckels, who was acting as a representative of three organizations—the Canadian Hepatitis C Network, the Canadian Hepatitis C Activist Group and the Hepatitis C United Resource Exchange—encouraging us to lobby the Premier and the minister to issue the proclamation. I wrote on behalf of our party on April 9. I haven't received a reply.

I appreciate that we are doing a unanimous consent today to raise awareness. What would it have taken for this government to follow the lead of six other provinces

and one territory to actually issue a proclamation and proclaim this as Hepatitis C Month? I don't think it would have taken a whole heck of a lot for the government to do that. I regret they didn't do that and that we are here with the next alternative, which is unanimous consent.

Given the comments I heard the minister make today about his concern for hepatitis C sufferers, I call on him and the Premier to clearly demonstrate their compassion and support for hepatitis C sufferers and immediately ensure that life-saving drugs for hep C sufferers are actually covered under the Ontario drug benefit plan to ensure that people who are not independently wealthy can actually pay for these therapies.

The minister would know that there was a very important media conference held at Queen's Park on January 30. A number of groups were involved, particularly the hep C society of Ontario. They condemned this government for its failure to ensure that life-saving drug therapies were covered under the Ontario drug benefit plan. In fact, the group said—and I'm quoting from their press release—"The groups were reacting to a series of recent decisions taken by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care which they claim severely restricts access to badly needed medications. They argued that these decisions have had an immense negative impact on men, women and children living with chronic disease and life-threatening disabilities, including cancer, HIV-AIDS, hepatitis C, hemophilia and arthritis." In fact, "The groups released a list of medications that have not been approved by the Ontario health ministry and suggested that the lack of approval was part of a concerted effort by the Conservative government to ration drugs and to incorporate an American-style HMO system into Canada by way of stealth."

The representative from the Hepatitis C Society of Canada said the following: "It is pretty pathetic when I cannot get treatment now, after living so long with hepatitis C," says Alain Courchesne.... "I had hoped to avoid getting sick until a better form of treatment is available. Now it is here, I'm sick but I can't get treated."

The cost of the drug that most interests hep C sufferers now is \$16,500 per round of treatment. That is cost-prohibitive for the majority of Ontarians and hep C sufferers. If this government wants to put its money where its mouth is today and really support hep C sufferers, this government would immediately guarantee that the drugs hep C sufferers need are covered under the Ontario drug benefit plan.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### NURSES

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, this morning your Minister of Health said he was sincerely surprised to learn just how many nurses are working two or three



part-time jobs at different hospitals. I'm sure that will come as very disappointing news for the fully 50% of Ontario nurses who are working part-time or casual, not because they want to but because full-time work is not there for them.

Your government's record on nurses was and remains abysmal. Your government fired thousands of nurses and compared them to Hula Hoop workers. We now have the second-fewest nurses per capita in the country. Can you now tell Ontario nurses how it is that your Minister of Health could be so woefully out of touch with the state of our health care system that he didn't know that so many of our nurses are working two or three part-time jobs, not out of choice but because they can't find full-time work in Ontario?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I believe the Minister of Health would like the opportunity to respond very directly to this question.

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I can assure the honourable member in this House that this government has been more aware than the governments that preceded it when it comes to the struggles our nursing profession has to face. The fact of the matter is that we're the government that created over 12,000 nursing positions in Ontario, we're the government that moved ahead on nurse practitioners, we're the government that is moving ahead on internationally trained nurses and we're the government that put our money where our mouth is and said to Ontario's hospitals, "We understand that you have to have a multi-year framework to make your human resource and staffing decisions." We're the ones who said that we understand that multi-year funding for our hospitals will help our hospitals hire the nurses and keep the nurses and deliver the quality health care that Ontarians expect and deserve.

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**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, yours is the government that fired nurses by the thousands. Yours is the government that compared nurses to Hula Hoop workers. Yours is the government that spent 400 million taxpayer dollars, not on hiring nurses, but on severance packages when you fired nurses. That's the truth about your record with nurses. Now Ontario finds itself in a position where we have the second-fewest nurses per capita in the country.

I am sure you will be familiar with the RNAO's study. They canvassed over 3,000 registered nurses worldwide, nurses who have left the province of Ontario. It turns out that two thirds of them cited downsizing and lack of full-time employment as their reasons for leaving Ontario.

They were asked, would they come back? Here's the good news: fully 78% of respondents said they would come back to Ontario. What would bring Ontario nurses back? Two thirds said they would return for the availability of full-time work.

When is it, Minister, that you are going to do something to ensure that the 50% of nurses who are working part-time and casual can in fact work full-time in Ontario?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Actions speak louder than words. Since 1997 the government on this side of the House has spent on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario over \$800 million to create new full-time positions and, yes, part-time positions for those who want them—over 12,833 positions to date.

The honourable member speaks about the nursing profession. He would know that Doris Grinspun at times has to disagree with the government on issues, and that's her role. But this is what she said just last year: "Nurses are better off today than they were during the period of 1996 to 1998," to be fair to her. "If I look back 25 years ago when I entered the profession, it's true that we have both won and lost. However, all in all, I think we're doing better."

I could not say it any better than Doris has done. That is the confidence that they have in what we are doing to help ensure that our nurses have a place in our Ontario, in our health care system, side by side with other medical professionals, delivering the quality health care that Ontarians expect and deserve.

**Mr McGuinty:** The minister is just confirming how out of touch he is with Ontario nurses and nursing conditions today.

Here are some of the comments collected in this same survey that I just referred to, comments from nurses who are living in other parts of the world but would like to come back to Ontario.

One of the comments: "The complete disregard and lack of respect for professional RNs and their need to earn a decent full-time income at one place of employment." That's the reason they weren't here.

Another says, "We left Canada for a more positive work environment, to be treated better by our employers and for better job security."

Another nurse says, "There were no full-time positions available in Ontario, only part-time or casual work. Hospitals and long-term care facilities all offered poor staffing, increased workload and nurse-patient ratios."

That is what is happening on the front lines of nursing today in Ontario.

We have a plan, Minister, and I'd advise you to take a good, long look at our plan. Our goal is to establish 70% of Ontario nurses working full-time at the end of four years. We'll give nurses what they want and what they need and what they deserve: respect and full-time work. Why won't you do that, Minister?

**Hon Mr Clement:** The honourable member talks about plans, but the record of his government and the successor government under the NDP is very clear. When they were in government for 10 years, we lost more than 10,000 hospital beds in the system. How is that going to secure and retain more nurses in the province of Ontario?

We have more than plans. We are fixing the broken promises of the Liberal and NDP era and we are making a difference for health care in Ontario. We are proud, on this side of the House, of the progress we have made today.

## HYDRO GENERATION

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** I have a question to the Premier. Premier, because of your hydro bungling and fumbling, because you failed to plan for our electricity needs, you are now going to install filthy diesel generators this summer in a number of Ontario neighbourhoods.

We understand that the communities you are considering putting these diesel generators into include Guelph, Kitchener, Burlington, Toronto, Etobicoke, London and Ottawa. The people living in those communities are, understandably, very concerned about the fact that you are about to impose on them your filthy diesel generators. Can you tell us whether or not these generators will be subject to the usual provisions of the environmental assessment legislation?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The leader of the official opposition would be the first one to stand up in this place and criticize the government for not being a prudent planner and preparing for every possible eventuality as this summer approaches. He was the first one to criticize us for the hot summer last year. If the hot air being generated in this chamber is any indication, it will be another hot summer again this year. There are certain things that we can't control on this side of the House, but we are being prudent managers in preparing for them in the worst-case eventuality.

**Mr McGuinty:** Your handling of the hydro issue in Ontario will make the perfect case study in poli-sci 101 about how to grossly mismanage, in the most incompetent way, public policy. That's what that's going to stand for. That will be your legacy.

I gather from that, Premier, that you are in fact telling those people living in those communities, and whatever other communities you are considering putting a diesel generator in, that you're going to exempt those generators from the usual environmental assessment process. What kind of opportunity will you extend to people living in those communities in those neighbourhoods, what kind of opportunity will you be granting them to comment publicly on your plans to put a generator in their community, and what efforts are you going to make to make them aware of the impact on their health and the quality of their air as a result of you putting your generators in their neighbourhoods?

**Hon Mr Eves:** First of all, the leader of the official opposition is entertaining his favourite sport: fear-mongering. If you don't have the facts, make something up. These proposals, on page 15 of the document, "must demonstrate that they will be compliant with any assessment, inspection, certification, approval, or other licensing that may be required by any authority having jurisdiction, including but not limited to federal, provincial, regional or municipal governments." With respect to your fearmongering, the odds are overwhelming that these generators will not be necessary, but we are doing

the prudent thing and planning for every eventuality, as it is incumbent upon us to do, and act responsibly.

The true solution to the generation of hydroelectric power in this province lies in the long-term generation capacity of the province of Ontario. The minister has already started, with respect to the budget, responding to some of the initiatives that we are taking to bring more generation of power on-stream. Some are proceeding, are very near and are at completion as we speak. There will be more to come in the not-too-distant future, so stay tuned.

**Mr McGuinty:** I gather what you just told me was that the diesel generators will indeed be subject to environmental assessment legislation. I gather that's just what you told me.

What you'll want to do is take a look at page 16 of the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp RFP for your dirty diesel generators. You might want to do this as well, Minister. It says that, "OEFC is seeking a declaration order from the Minister of the Environment requesting that the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act not apply to the use of short-term temporary generators."

Maybe you can tell us now: do you intend to grant that request, the one sought by the OEFC, or will you stand up for those neighbourhoods and those residents of Ontario, and act on their behalf and say yes to a full environmental assessment for your plans to put your generators in their neighbourhood?

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**Hon Mr Eves:** There's going to be an environmental process that will be followed. But going back to the issue of generation of more power, there will be 2,500 megawatts of additional power available by this summer. I think that surely the leader of the official opposition will be happy with that, and he'd like to actually stand up and compliment the government on doing something, and on our future initiatives. I look forward to you voting for that on the floor of this Legislature.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** New question?

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Today is World Asthma Day. About a million Ontario residents suffer from asthma, including 100,000 children. Over 150 people will die this year in this province as a result of it. Your latest scheme, Premier, to cover up your disaster of hydro privatization—that is, dirty diesel generators in Toronto, London, Kitchener, Burlington and Guelph—will make that problem even worse. It will increase the number of smog days. It will increase the number of people who suffer from respiratory illness. It will result in more deaths. Premier, will you stop this insane scheme to generate electricity in the dirtiest way possible before more people die?

**Hon Mr Eves:** If he was listening to the response to the previous question asked, he would know that there will be 2,500 megawatts of additional power available for Ontario consumers this summer. That is certainly a step in the right direction. It's an increase of approximately



11% of the power available to the consumers in the province of Ontario, and we will do everything we possibly can to make sure that we continue along those lines and to continue to generate more clean power in the province of Ontario than ever before.

**Mr Hampton:** Well, Premier, you can go on making your predictions of more power supply just as your former Minister of Energy did and your now Minister of Energy does, but the reality is, you want to put in place, in neighbourhoods where people live, dirty diesel generators. In California when this proposal was brought forward, they noted that it increases the cancer risk for people by 50%. It's five times dirtier than the dirtiest coal plant.

I think I understand why you don't want it subject to the Environmental Assessment Act, because if you have to go through the Environmental Assessment Act you would have to put forward a case as to why this is necessary and you'd have to allow people to examine it and you'd have to allow people to put forward alternatives.

Premier, are you so desperate to cover up the hydro privatization fiasco that you don't want people to be able to ask questions, you don't want people to be able to demand that you make the case? Is that how desperate you are, that you want to deny even that level of accountability and you're willing to pollute people's air that much?

**Hon Mr Eves:** The leader of the third party will know that an adjudicator has been appointed in this matter. It is not for the government, and I'm sure he wouldn't want the government, to politically interfere with that adjudication process.

But I wish he would get back to the issue of the generation of 2,500 megawatts of new power available for Ontario consumers this summer, enough power to take care of 1.8 million homes in the province of Ontario. He's the same political person who last year at this time stood in his place and said that we would have all kinds of blackouts all across the province of Ontario; we would grind to a halt. Guess what? He was wrong. He will surely do the decent thing now and stand up and apologize for those ridiculous fearmongering statements he made last year.

**Mr Hampton:** Premier, it's you who should be apologizing to the people of Ontario, first of all for driving the hydro rates out of sight, then for the brown-outs and the risk of blackouts, and now for polluting their air more than ever.

This is a puffer. It's used by asthma sufferers. If you walk into any classroom in the province, you'll see children using puffers like this. Their asthma is made worse by the very scheme, the very strategy, of using dirty diesel generators. You don't seem to understand that we've already got a very bad smog situation. Diesel generators will make it worse.

What will it take for you to understand that this involves the health of hundreds of thousands of people and tens of thousands of children? Will we have to bring

in hundreds of these puffers, because that's what's going to result from your scheme? That's the natural health result of your scheme. Will we have to bring in hundreds of puffers like this to make the case to you that you're wrong and you should withdraw this now?

**Hon Mr Eves:** The leader of the third party might want to have a whole box full of those on hand when he tries to drive his diesel bus at this year's International Plowing Match, as he tried to do last year. You might want to think about that, in terms of polluting the environment, before you start going down this road.

The solution to the future in the province of Ontario lies with the generation of new, clean power, and we are delivering 2,500 megawatts of new, clean power in this province this summer and we will continue to do things to do that until we are at 20% above the needs of the province of Ontario.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Again to the Premier. Premier, first there was Walkerton and then SARS. I think it's fair to say that in the last few years the people of Ontario have really learned how valuable our public health units are.

Last year, when we demanded that you provide immediate funding to health units so that they could prepare for the West Nile virus, you said it wasn't necessary, but then at the very last minute you provided 100% of the funding. But it was too little, too late.

This year, after health units in many parts of the province have already been dealing with the SARS virus, they're already overextended, you send out this glitzy, glossy thing telling the people of Ontario what your government is doing about West Nile. But then we find out that you'll only provide 50% of the money that the health units need for a West Nile program.

After Walkerton, after SARS, after all of the public health challenges that our public health units are facing, do you still think you can only pay to get half of the job done?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** To the leader of the third party, the Ministry of Health has a very aggressive seven-point plan to provide \$100 million toward dealing with the issue of West Nile virus in this province over the next five years. I have talked to your friend in the province of Manitoba, Premier Doer, and received advice from him on how that province dealt with an extreme outbreak of West Nile virus, on a per capita basis more serious than the one here in the province of Ontario, last year. We are taking advice from everywhere we can get it to contain and deal with the West Nile virus in the province of Ontario, and we have not abdicated this responsibility at all.

I have never said that we were doing nothing about the West Nile virus. We are doing \$100 million worth of assistance to make sure that communities are able to cope with the West Nile virus in a method that suits them and their needs at a particular time in their geographical loca-

tion and climate, because no two places—you coming from the northwestern region of the province will certainly know that the needs in Kenora are not the same as they are in downtown Toronto.

**Mr Hampton:** Public health units are now having to take money away, for example, from the fight against tuberculosis; they're having to take money out of their budget to deal with sexually transmitted diseases; they're having to take money out of mandatory program budgets to prevent West Nile. Why? Because after all your advertising, you're only going to provide 50% of the money to get the job done. After all your government has done, downloading on to municipalities, putting more and more costs and responsibilities on to municipalities, you want to say that you're doing the job on West Nile, but in fact you're only providing 50% of the money and you're saying to the health units, "Go to the municipality and get the other 50%."

I ask you again, Premier, after what happened at Walkerton, the deaths of people, after what's happened with SARS, do you really think it's adequate to make all kinds of announcements, send out the propaganda and then only provide half of the money to get the job done?

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**Hon Mr Eves:** Surely the leader of the third party is not going to stand in his place in this Legislature and say that the reason why a SARS outbreak occurred in the province of Ontario was because of any funding or lack of funding to public health units in this province. He knows very well how the particular SARS incident in this province started. He knows how it got here with one individual and he knows how the health care professionals in this province responded as well as anybody in the world could have responded to contain what could have been a very serious outbreak.

The leader of third party does those health care professionals no justice and he is serving no useful purpose other than standing in his place and fearmongering. You're really criticizing the health care professionals, the very nurses that we talked about earlier, the doctors, the lab technicians, the paramedics, the people who put their lives on the line every day for you and I and for the benefit of the people of Ontario. To play cheap political theatrics with this is surely even above you, Howie, on the floor of this Legislature.

*Applause.*

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** Thank you very much, Premier. Some people whistle when they're going by the graveyard; others stand up and applaud. We can make the comparison here.

My question is to the Premier. The Dominion Bond Rating Service reports that you're running a \$2-billion deficit. The chief economist at TD Canada Trust agrees. Even a respected columnist for the Report on Business says that you are employing Enron-like accounting to cook the books and hide your deficit. Premier, what

public asset will you be selling so that you can give corporations another giant tax cut?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Last Thursday, the leader of the official opposition stood in his place and made some sarcastic comment about me referring to nurses as Hula Hoops. He hasn't had the common decency to stand in his place and apologize for that.

**Mr McGuinty:** Who said that?

**Hon Mr Eves:** Not me. That's all you need to know.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Order. Premier, continue please.

**Hon Mr Eves:** Today the leader of the official opposition stands in his place and arrogantly, smugly and sarcastically refers to Conservative members of this Legislature talking about the very serious issue of SARS and talks about them whistling by the graveyard.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Premier, you may continue.

**Hon Mr Eves:** You might do well to return to Chicago at your expense and get some more media training.

**Mr McGuinty:** I can understand why you don't want to address the issue that I raised. The chief economist at TD Canada Trust says you're running a \$2-billion deficit. DBRS says you're running a \$1.9-billion deficit. The Report on Business says you're running a \$2-billion deficit and refers to your accounting as being Enron-like.

When are you going to be straight with the people of Ontario, Premier? When are you going to have the courage to tell them that you cannot promise them \$5 billion in tax cuts and at the same time put the \$2 billion back into public schools that Rozanski said you took out and that you have to put back in, that you cannot at the same time fix the double cohort mess that you created, that you cannot at the same time hire back the thousands of nurses that you fired, that you cannot at the same time hire back the water inspectors that you fired, that you cannot at the same time build the hydro generation you neglected to build during the course of the past eight years and balance your budget?

Why won't you have the strength and the courage, Premier, to stand up here today and say to Ontarians, "I'm going to be straight with you. We cannot do all those things and balance the budget. So instead I've chosen to run a \$2-billion deficit"?

**Hon Mr Eves:** A Liberal talking about a balanced budget is certainly an oxymoron. Liberals don't balance budgets. The very person—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Premier, take your seat. Premier, you may continue.

**Hon Mr Eves:** We have a track record that is second to none. For the first time since 1908, five balanced budgets in a row have been produced in the province of Ontario.

There were many times over the six and a half years that I was finance minister in this province that DBRS



and other bond rating agencies, both in New York and Toronto disagreed with the path this government was taking. They, like you, failed to grasp one simple fact: if you allow millions of Ontarians to keep their own money, they spend it. That has generated 1.15 million jobs and \$16 billion a year more in revenue so we can do all of the things that you talked about in your question.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** My question today is to the Minister of Labour. In my previous career as a manufacturing specialist, I used to belong to IAPA, which is the Industrial Accident Prevention Association. I understand, Minister, that you attended a major event with IAPA last month, involving over 1,000 youth, where you made an important announcement. Can you please tell us what that announcement was all about?

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We had a conference at the IAPA last month. Over 1,000 young people came out to this conference. It was really quite remarkable, because we had 1,000 young people, union leaders, corporations, CEOs, board members and volunteers. Everyone came out together for one thing, and that was to lower the number of incidents of young worker injuries in the province of Ontario. We launched at that conference WorkSmartOntario. It's something that I'm sure my Liberal colleagues would like to look up. WorkSmartOntario—it's a great Web site. It's in the Ministry of Labour Web site. This teaches our young people how to be safe in the workplace, the questions that they should ask, what they should look for and how to refuse work if they feel that they're at risk. There is ample information there. We're helping young people prepare themselves to come home safely every single night.

**Mr Gill:** I want to thank the hard-working minister for this enlightenment. Can you please tell us about that exciting new Web site that the youth are so interested in? Can you please give us the address of the Web site?

**Hon Mr Clark:** That's an easy one: [worksmart-ontario.gov.on.ca](http://worksmart-ontario.gov.on.ca). This Web site—and I know that the Liberals and the NDP all support us on this—very clearly shows young people how to protect themselves on the job. This Web site actually provides them not only with occupational health and safety information, but it also provides them with employment standards information. It gives them the answers to the frequently asked questions that I'm sure the member for St Catharines gets all the time. As a matter of fact, he could probably enlighten himself by logging on to WorkSmartOntario, and actually find out the answers so that he can hand them off to the young people in his community.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

**Ms Sandra Papatello (Windsor West):** My question is for the Minister of Health. More and more questions

are being raised about your lack of commitment to public health units across Ontario, which has put families in Ontario at risk. Your cutbacks to hospitals have eliminated any surge capacity to deal with a crisis. Your firing of public health scientists leaves Ontario with none, while New York has some 150.

You have said in this past week that you've given public health units more. But if you look at your own public accounts and statements over the last four years, it's very clear from your own documents that public health units across Ontario have, over the last four years, \$50 million less.

I ask you: why would you not tell everyone the facts about your funding of public health units and how you have cut their funding over the last four years by \$50 million?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** It's just not true. It's just not true what the honourable member is saying. I will give the honourable member the actuals—if you can read a balance sheet—versus the estimates. The actuals for 1998 were \$304.4 million; for 1999, they were \$337.7 million; for 2000, \$355.9 million; for 2001, \$394.6 million; and the actuals for 2002 were \$435.9 million. The increase from 1998 to 2002 for public health in the province of Ontario, municipal and provincial, both went up by 43%. Both went up. The total additional public health resources is an increase of 43%.

**Ms Papatello:** You're trying to suggest that numbers you make available to the public are inaccurate. I don't believe you. It looks like you're prepared to make up whatever numbers work for you at the time.

Let me read you a quotation, a position statement from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies pleading for more funding: "Boards of health currently lack the resources—both financial and human—to effectively address these recent developments. Due to underfunding, boards have had to use funds allocated to other programs, which already do not meet compliance, toward these new developments." It goes on to say that, according to their latest survey, your cutbacks to public health care funding in Ontario means that "no board of health is fully compliant with the Mandatory Health Programs and Service Guidelines."

Right now, you keep cutting their funding. The number of public health units complying with the guidelines is zero. I think you should tell the public the truth about your funding of public health units.

**Hon Mr Clement:** The truth is that since 2000, the overall public health funding has increased by over \$100 million. The truth is that our overall laboratory funding has increased by 33% since 2001, providing an extra \$62.6 million this year. That's the truth.

If the honourable member is interested in quoting, I have a quotation from a letter to the editor by Dr Don Low, microbiologist in chief at Mount Sinai Hospital. He said:

"We have learned a great deal about SARS during the last eight weeks, an outbreak that could not have been

prevented whether or not a hospital or the province had reacted more swiftly or if there had been different public health and infection control infrastructures in place. The fact is that we have been lauded for our control measures and the swift response of public health that turned the SARS epidemic in Ontario from an event that might have had 200,000 victims to one not likely to have more than 320."

That's from the microbiologist in chief. We are committed to our front-line health workers, we are committed to our public health officials and that commitment will only grow under an Ernie Eves government.

#### DUFFINS ROUGE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, on April 21, 2003, you announced that you had signed a minister's zoning order under the Planning Act to protect the Duffins Rouge agricultural preserve. This indeed was welcome news at the time. Back in 1999, Durham was promised that this land would be preserved for agricultural use forever. We were told that this agreement signed at the time between the town of Pickering, the region of Durham and the province would ensure that this land would be theirs for future generations.

Recently it seems that this promise is in doubt. The city of Pickering was starting a growth management study, a study funded by developers, that some worried could lead to the development of this land. Now I hear that Mayor Wayne Arthurs of Pickering is disputing the acts of the province. For example, in today's Toronto Star, "He says he never considered the agricultural designation to be permanent," if you can understand that. Minister, can you provide some clarity for the House today on this important issue?

**Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I thank the honourable member for his question. I too was surprised to read the comments of Mayor Arthurs in the Star today. I didn't think there was any doubt about what was intended in relation to this land. I say to you that this government, the Ernie Eves government, took action to make sure that the promise made by three levels of government was a promise that would be kept.

The honourable member a moment ago, when asking the question, referred to an agreement that was signed in May 1999 by the town of Pickering, the region of Durham and the province of Ontario. It was an agreement that made clear that this land would remain agricultural forevermore.

I think the best way to clear up any doubt is to actually quote from the agreement that Mayor Arthurs signed on behalf of Pickering. He said at that time, "It is the intention of the parties that the covenants and easements herein shall run with the property in perpetuity." It could not be any clearer.

**Mr O'Toole:** Clearly, Wayne Arthurs has drunk from the Liberal Kool-Aid, it appears. Certainly, Minister,

there is no ambiguity in your answer. I gather that some people do not share this view. I read with great interest that some members of Pickering council put on black armbands and claimed that this was the death of democracy. I know this decision was made after careful and thorough review, and so I'm hoping you can share with me some of the advice that you received prior to making this commitment to keep this as a permanent agricultural preserve for the people of Durham and indeed the people of the province of Ontario.

**Hon Mr Young:** I think democracy means listening to people. I think democracy means living up to one's word. I think democracy means keeping one's promise. The people of Pickering were very clearly promised that the land in question would be protected—not protected for a month or two when it was politically convenient, but protected forevermore. If there was any doubt about it, that doubt was cleared up when David Crombie prepared his report and once again confirmed in his advice that this land should be agricultural forevermore.

We didn't make this decision lightly. We listened to the people of Pickering. We heard their advocate, the Minister of Finance, stand up and speak on behalf of the people of that area. We heard David Crombie. I say to you that we remembered that there was written commitment to the people of that region. It was a good idea then; it's a good idea today. This government believes that a promise made is a promise kept.

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#### SOFTWOOD LUMBER

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** A question for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, four times over the last 20 years, the softwood lumber barons in the United States have imposed punishing duties and penalties on Canadian softwood lumber, much of it produced by sawmills in northern Ontario. Each time this has happened, a review of the factual evidence has disclosed that the duties and the penalties are completely unfounded.

Now this has happened again. We understand that your government is currently in a back room in Washington secretly negotiating a deal that would result in Ontario caving in to those same softwood lumber barons. It would result in many small sawmills essentially losing their allocation of crown timber and eventually being forced to close, large tracts of crown forest essentially being put up for sale and potentially being sold to mills in Michigan or Minnesota at the expense of jobs and communities in Ontario.

Minister, are you caving in to those softwood lumber barons in the United States? If so, why?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education):** In response to the question from the leader of the third party, I just want him to know that the Ontario government continues to work diligently in order to continue to support an all-out challenge of the US softwood lumber duties, both at the World Trade Organiza-



tion and under the North American free trade agreement. We remain open to consideration of a reasonable alternative to litigation, and certainly we are doing everything we possibly can.

**Mr Hampton:** It was that last part, the "but" part, that worries us, Minister. As you know, Ontario forest policy for the past 50 years has essentially said that if a sawmill or a paper mill wants access to crown timber, they must tie that timber to a mill which produces jobs and economic activities for communities. In other words, no jobs, no wood. What we're told now is that your government is essentially prepared to sever that relationship, that you are negotiating in Washington to essentially allow a company to purchase crown timber without any guarantee of jobs, without any guarantee of economic activity.

Minister, will you guarantee the people of northern and central Ontario that you will not sign on to any deal like that without holding public hearings in the communities that may be affected?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I can assure the member opposite that our government will do everything we possibly can in order to protect the interests, and we will do everything we can to protect the lumber industry and the workers in the lumber industry.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, in 1998 your government forced the hostile amalgamation of the hospitals in Trenton, Belleville, Picton and North Hastings. Since that time, they have had to implement cuts to patients each and every year. The ultimate is this year, where because of a \$2-million shortfall they are being forced to cut nursing hours substantially. Cutting nursing hours means cutting nurses, means cutting patient care. I contrast that with the throne speech in which you had input, which says that "To increase the number of nurses practising in Ontario, your government will launch an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program."

Minister, you can't have it both ways. You can't be laying off nurses quietly while at the same time claiming to want to increase the number of hours. I'm going to ask you to intervene into the business plan for Quinte Health Care. Provide them with the proper funding.

Will you assure the people of the Quinte area that there will be no reduction whatsoever in nursing hours or hours of service care to patients in that community?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'd certainly be happy to review any situation, but I must tell the honourable member that last year alone the increase to base operating funding for hospitals approached \$1 billion, and certainly Quinte Healthcare received its fair share of the total.

This year, of course, there will be a 5% increase, which was announced in the budget announcement, and in terms of capital funding, an additional budget which is

in an increase of 44% to base funding since 1995. So on both the operating and the capital side, we are building and rebuilding our hospital sector to provide wonderful new modern facilities that help us recruit and retain our medical professionals, including our nurses. I mentioned earlier in question period the \$800 million of spending for nurse recruitment and retention, and certainly Quinte Healthcare is no stranger to that. So they have our continued support and commitment.

**Mr Parsons:** Minister, this is a very simple situation. Approximately 30 nurses will lose their jobs because of the \$2 million in underfunding. These hospitals that you joined together are 150 kilometres apart. They experience far higher costs than two hospitals that are next to each other. Quinte Healthcare, in their business plan to you, says that they will be reducing nurses and nursing hours. Your rhetoric says that you'll be attracting more nurses. We have, as a Legislature, thanked the doctors and nurses, the RPNs, for their service during SARS. This is a heck of a thank you, when nurses will be losing their jobs. I ask you for a very simple commitment. Based on the throne speech, will you commit that no nurses in Ontario will lose their jobs?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Let me bring the honourable member up to date. We are aware of a number of plans that have been filed by a number of hospitals, of course, and those become a topic of discussion between ministry officials and the local hospital authorities. That will be the case in Quinte Healthcare as well. I can certainly assure the honourable member that in terms of health care, in terms of access to health care in his riding, our commitment is second to none. We've proved it through our funding; we've proved it though our interest in accountability; we've proved it in our interest in priority funding, to make sure that priority services are funded regardless, and that kind of commitment will continue.

#### NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** My question is for the tireless, hard-working, effective Minister of Agriculture and Food, renowned in rural Ontario, I want you to know, and building on her reputation as a very effective minister representing Huron and Bruce. Minister, as you know, farmers in my great riding of Perth-Middlesex are very interested in the ongoing consultations and discussions under the Nutrient Management Act. They have strongly supported widely consulting with all parties and providing an open process for the protection of both rural water wells and the competitiveness of Ontario's agriculture industry, the second-biggest in the province. They've appreciated the opportunity to meet with you to share their concerns about the regulations under the act.

I understand the changes to the previously proposed regulations were announced recently. Could you provide the Legislature and the farmers right across Ontario with the details?

**Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** I'd like to thank the member from Perth-Middlesex for

the question and thank him for his support for his agricultural community. He's done a fabulous job in that area.

As a result of a lot of consultations that happened over this intersession, if you will, on March 21 we responded to the consultations that we had had out in the communities. We decided that we needed to have a balanced approach that provided more clarity to the agricultural community and flexibility that would allow the community to come up to the environmental needs that we had for them, but allow them the opportunity to do it in different ways depending on if they were in eastern Ontario or western Ontario. We put into place and we kept as the basis of our regulations the important requirement of ensuring environmental protection; we made restrictions on the application of nutrients on the land; we clarified very carefully the requirements of a nutrient strategy and a nutrient plan; and we also talked about minimum setbacks from municipal wells and surface water, because that's important—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** The minister's time is up. Supplementary?

1530

**Mr Johnson:** Thank you very much for that answer, Minister, and for the hard work you put into the process for the people of rural Ontario. I heard back from many farmers after your meeting in Stratford at the Victorian Inn in early February, and they were impressed with you as minister representing them.

One issue that was of particular concern for the farmers in my riding and across Ontario was the availability of cost-shared funding to assist with the implementation of the regulations. Could you explain how our government has addressed these concerns—

**Interjection:** Where are those regs?

**Mr Johnson:** I'm sorry. Am I interrupting somebody in the opposition?

Minister, could you please explain how our government—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Johnson:** Does the member from Kingston and the Islands have the floor or do I?

Minister, could you please explain how our government has addressed this concern and what proposals have been advanced to financially assist our food growers, the farmers?

**Hon Mrs Johns:** I want to say that we are very proud on this side of the House about the consultations we have done with nutrient management. We're also very proud of the comments that were made in both the budget and the throne speech to alleviate concerns the agricultural community may have had. We're very clear that when we implement regulations along the line, when we come along and bring a new category into the regulations, that we will certainly have the funding to be able to move that category along, that we will work with the agricultural community to decide what that funding should look like. The farm groups have a number of different ideas that we are starting to consult on. We will work to make sure we have that benefit there.

We understand on this side of the House that these changes benefit all of society. They benefit the environment of all Ontarians. We're going to work with the agricultural community to make sure that those costs are borne appropriately.

## HYDRO GENERATION

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** I have a question for the Minister of Energy. Minister, Don Valley East residents were shocked and appalled to hear that you're considering putting a giant diesel generator at the Leslie transformer station. I'm sure you're aware that this station is in the middle of a residential neighbourhood only a couple of hundred metres from literally thousands of residents living in the Finch and Leslie neighbourhood.

I've spent all last week and this weekend since then literally talking to the community residents and listening to their concerns. They're very clear. There is already bad air quality in our city, both from pollution and from cars on Finch Avenue. Having this compounded by your dirty diesel generators is simply not acceptable.

Let me tell you what just one resident said. This is a letter from Karima Dhanani, who told me how her husband is suffering from chronic respiratory illness. She says, "It is difficult for him to step out of the house due to smog. Premier Eves will sacrifice him, the father of my two small children, to meet his objective."

So, my question to you, Minister, on behalf of Don Valley residents is this: I want your commitment today that the Leslie transformer site will be removed from your request for proposal so that my neighbours' health and well-being will no longer be threatened by your dirty diesel generators.

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** In addition to the 2,500 megawatts of new, clean electricity that'll be coming on to the grid in the province of Ontario this summer, we felt it was prudent for two reasons: one, to try to encourage less reliance on high-cost imported power, and two, to take some prudent measures to ensure that there was adequate electricity supply in the province of Ontario—

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** A contingency plan.

**Hon Mr Baird:** —a contingency plan, as one of my colleagues says.

We are looking to the private sector to ask what opportunities might be available. There could be opportunities with respect to large natural gas portable generation or from some small diesel-powered generation. I would suspect with the latter that it would be fair to say there are more than 4,500 of them today, probably hundreds in residential environments like his own community; that, for example, if we'd had this policy in place last year, it might have been required for 14 minutes.

**Mr Caplan:** The minister's answer is simply not good enough. This is your request for proposal: on page 7, June 15, 2003, is when you want to have the diesel



generators come on-stream, and on page 16 it's very clear that you'll want to exempt them from environmental assessment legislation. That is simply not good enough for the people of Don Valley East. They know that these generators will be running during peak demand hours. This means that in late afternoon and early evening when they're getting home from work, when they want to be outside and enjoy a summer evening, that's going to be impossible. They know that these machines generate sulphur levels almost 50 times greater than cars on Finch Avenue. They know that because of the geography in the area. Seneca Hill is the highest point in the city of Toronto, and with the nature of the generation, the emissions will be staying in the community and will not dissipate into the atmosphere.

Minister, it's your company. Ontario Electricity Financial Corp is run by Michael Gourley, formerly Premier Eves's right-hand man. Residents in Don Valley East—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I'm afraid the member's time is up. He's well over the time.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The member opposite stood in his place and said, "I know, I know, I know"—they know, they know, they know. Well, he doesn't know. We haven't made any decisions. What we've said is that we want to go to the private sector and ask what requirements might be able to be offered. They could be clean-burning natural gas which could help reduce our reliance on high-cost imported power. In the unlikely event, despite the 2,500 megawatts of new, clean electricity coming on-line—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** The member for Don Valley East might want to listen to the answer so you can take this news back to your constituents. Had we had this plan in place last year, and if it had been fully subscribed, in addition to the 4,500 such generators which are already operating in the province, which are already operating in the member's own constituency, it would have been required—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** In residential neighbourhoods. They're operating today. The member opposite asked a question; he might want to listen. Last summer, had this plan been employed, it would have been 14 minutes. It's disappointing the member opposite doesn't want to listen—

**The Speaker:** I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

## WINE INDUSTRY

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. As you know, Ontario is home to some of the greatest wines produced in the world—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Order. Stop the clock so the member can have the time. Come to order, please. The member for Niagara Falls has the floor to ask a question. Sorry for the interruption.

**Mr Maves:** My riding is home to Reif, Vincor, Hildebrand Estates, Chateau des Charmes, and many others. It seems that every time we open the food and wine section of the paper we read about another great Ontario wine that has just won international acclaim. Just a few weeks ago, one of Ontario's wineries became the first Canadian winery to win the top overall award, the Grand Vinitaly Award 2003 in Verona, Italy. This industry is still growing and there are many people who aren't aware of the great products that we offer here in our province.

This government and its previous ministers have a strong track record of support for this industry through new marketing initiatives, passing VQA legislation, investing money and developing partnerships with Ontario wine industry, resulting in new jobs. Minister, what are you doing to support this important Niagara industry?

**Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** I appreciate the member's question, and I congratulate him as well on his outstanding support for the Ontario wine industry. He's been a very strong advocate. By coincidence, the member asked me at a very good time because earlier today, I was present at a new initiative to help promote Ontario's award-winning VQA wines. Believe it or not, to the member for Stoney Creek, it actually involved the Toronto Star. We don't often agree with the Toronto Star, but we do agree on the high quality of Ontario award-winning wines.

A very interesting and exciting new initiative called the Wine Connection, the first of its kind in all of North America, like a newspaper wine club, is a partnership between the Toronto Star and the Ontario Wine Council to promote Ontario VQA wines. Already, in its first week, it's planning on selling out its initial stock of wines that are driving VQA sales.

I'm happy to report to members of the assembly that in the past year alone through the LCBO, we've seen an increase of 21% year over year in Ontario VQA wine sales, which means jobs in the industry, it means investment in agribusiness and agri-tourism, and it means good things to the province of Ontario.

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## PETITIONS

### SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** J'ai ici une pétition avec plus de 4 000 noms provenant de 104 communautés, dont celles de Plantagenet, L'Orignal, Sturgeon Falls, Timmins, Elliot Lake, Chelmsford, Port Colborne, North Bay, Cornwall, Larker Lake et plusieurs autres.

« Pétition des aînés et des retraités francophones parrainée par la Fédération des Aînés et retraités francophones de l'Ontario.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que notre président, Jean Comtois, a clairement pris position en notre nom, dans ses lettres du 16 juillet au 16 août 2002 contre l'augmentation de 15% des frais de résidence imposée aux personnes recevant des soins de longue durée en Ontario;

« Attendu qu'aucune réponse, pas même un accusé de réception, n'a été reçu du ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée;

« Nous, soussignés, rappelons à l'attention du ministre Clement, le message de notre président et confirmons que nous sommes contre l'augmentation, même graduelle, de 15%, des frais imposés aux personnes recevant des soins de longue durée en Ontario »

J'y ajoute ma signature avec fierté.

### SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I am standing, Mr Speaker.

It's my pleasure to present petitions to the House provided by the Dream Team, a group of extraordinary people who are fighting for supportive housing for people with mental illness. They've provided me with thousands of cards which I will present to the Premier tomorrow.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Conservative government's failure to provide supportive housing for people with mental illness has left thousands of Ontarians homeless or living in squalid, substandard conditions; and

"Whereas 5,000 units of supportive housing are needed in Toronto and an estimated 14,000 are needed province-wide;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing across Ontario so that people facing mental illness can rebuild their lives and contribute to society."

I will proudly affix my signature to this petition and I thank this tremendous Dream Team for the incredible work they are doing on behalf of people with mental illness.

### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I'm very pleased to present a petition to the Legislature of Ontario with 39 signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes at home to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over the next five years."

### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** I have a petition that is related to tuition fees, signed by hundreds of students from the Lakehead University Student Union. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels, and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

I am in full agreement with this. I am passing it off to Brian Donohue, our page from Marathon, in my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North. Thanks, Brian. It's great to have you here.

### SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition that has been signed by hundreds of workers of associations for community living, their families and friends in Sudbury, Manitoulin Island and Espanola. The petition is addressed to the Legislature of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas in June 2001 the Honourable John Baird, in his address to the Ontario Association for Community Living annual conference, acknowledged the funding crisis in developmental services related to staff salaries and benefits by stating, '...the challenge of high turnover and staff burnout must be addressed. It must be addressed now with the existing services and it must be addressed for the standards next year. So in our first year we will



commit to almost \$32 million to help address the quality of care and help revitalize this sector.'

"Whereas in September 2001 Minister Baird repeated the commitment he made in June for new funding for developmental services in a variety of initiatives including \$31.7 million to address the high staff turnover and burnout by directing these funds to improve salaries and benefits and offer more staff training and development; and

"Whereas the \$31.7 million, although welcomed, will only scratch the surface of the salary and benefit crisis for workers in this field and additional funding on a multi-year basis is necessary to address this crisis;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to ensure the government of Ontario honours the commitment made in June and September by the Honourable John Baird to continue to direct additional funds for staff salaries and benefits over a multi-year period so that the high turnover and hiring difficulties are resolved and that people with developmental disabilities are offered the quality service they deserve, delivered by staff who make this work their career."

I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

#### ABORTION

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** I have the pleasure of introducing a petition signed by 568 good citizens of Cambridge addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and Parliament assembled.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, draw to the attention of the House the following:

"That Ontarians are being asked to consider alternative forms of health care delivery due to escalating costs; and

"That 65% of Ontarians surveyed in October 2002 objected to the public funding of abortions on demand; and

"That almost all abortions are done for 'socio-economic' reasons in Canada; and

"That the Canada Health Act imposes no duty on the provinces to fund any services other than those which are medically necessary; and

"That there are no legal impediments preventing provinces from de-insuring abortion;

"Therefore your petitioners call upon the Parliament of Ontario to enact legislation which will de-insure induced abortion."

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care facilities in this province are understaffed, underfunded and ignored by the current government;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and of other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris-Eves government;

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to other jurisdictions to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are inadequately covered by OHIP;

"Whereas long waiting lists for diagnostic tests such as MRIs, CT scans and ultrasounds are jeopardizing the health of many individuals already facing serious illness;

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has now spent over \$250 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Ernie Eves to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest instead in health and long-term care in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature. I'm in agreement with this.

#### CREDIT UNIONS

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** I have a petition which I wish to present on behalf of the member for London North Centre. It has 225 names and was given to her by the Kellogg Employees Credit Union.

"Whereas Credit Union Central of Ontario's (Central) 208 members represent 90% of Ontario's credit unions, have over one million members, manage assets in excess of \$12 billion and have branches in communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas Credit Union Central of Ontario and Credit Union Central of British Columbia are planning to merge the finance and treasury functions of both operations into one interprovincial council; and

"Whereas 98%, on a proportional basis by assets, of Central's members voted in favour of the merger resolution presented to them on November 23, 2002; and

"Whereas legislative and regulatory changes are required to the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994, before the merger can be completed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Minister of Finance to make the necessary legislative changes so that the merger can be finalized."

1550

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we strenuously object to the proposed Richmond landfill expansion by Canadian Waste Services; and

"Whereas fractured limestone is an inappropriate location for a landfill; and

"Whereas the town of Greater Napanee produces less than 1% of the waste sent to the Richmond landfill, and has indicated that it is not a willing host of the proposed expansion; and

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government has indicated that they will break their promise that no community should have to accept waste against their will;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that this Conservative government keep their promise, stop the expansion of this landfill and make waste reduction a priority for Ontario."

Because I am in full agreement, I very happily sign this petition.

## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** The original number of signatures for this petition was 30,000, and I continue to receive petitions from across the riding, and the province as well.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in the private member's bill An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted....

"Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red lights flashing....

"And we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

Of course, I have signed this petition.

## AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** The title of this petition is "Listen: Our Hearing is Important!"

"Whereas services delisted by the Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

"Whereas the new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario; and

"Whereas this new Harris-Eves government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario; and

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Harris-Eves government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

Again, I affix my signature to this petition and give it to Aaron to bring to the table.

## AIR QUALITY

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government's wholly owned Nanticoke generating station is North America's largest dirty coal-fired electricity producing plant and Ontario's largest producer of the chemicals and acid gases which contribute to deadly smog and acid rain; and

"Whereas the Nanticoke plant, which has more than doubled its dangerous emissions under the Conservative government, is now the worst air polluter in all of Canada, spewing out over five million kilograms of toxic chemicals each year, including many cancer-causing chemicals and mercury, a potent and dangerous neurotoxin; and

"Whereas at least 13 Ontario municipalities and seven northeastern US states have expressed concerns that Ontario Power Generation's proposed cleanup plan for Nanticoke is inadequate in protecting the air quality and health and safety of their residents; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association has stated that 1,900 Ontarians die prematurely each year and we pay \$1 billion annually in health-related costs as a result of air pollution; and

"Whereas because the Conservative government has lifted the moratorium on the sale of coal-fired plants and has set a date for deregulation of electricity, the operator of the Nanticoke plant will likely stoke up production to maximize profits which will only worsen the air quality in cities like Toronto, Hamilton, Welland, Niagara Falls and St Catharines;



"We the undersigned petition that the Ernie Eves government immediately order that the Nanticoke generating station be converted from dirty coal to cleaner-burning natural gas."

I affix my signature. I am in agreement.

## OPPOSITION DAY

### SARS

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** I move that the Legislative Assembly supports the establishment of a commission of inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act to investigate the SARS outbreak and provide recommendations on how best to prevent and respond to such an outbreak in the future.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** Mr McGuinty has moved Opposition Day number one. The leader of the opposition.

**Mr McGuinty:** I am pleased that there are some members of the government here and I hope that they will draw from this motion tabled here today that it is presented to this Legislature in a very non-partisan spirit, with a view to ensuring that we draw whatever lessons that we might from this terrible SARS experience.

On behalf of the Ontario Liberal caucus, I want to begin by congratulating the people of Toronto and the people of Ontario, because the people have defeated SARS. I know the battle against the illness continues still, but the people have already won because while they fought to control SARS, they did not let SARS control them. Where there was the potential for panic, they supplied resolve. Where there was the potential for fear, they showed us courage. When the world suggested that we were down, the people stood up. We in this House enjoy a very, very special privilege. We are elected to represent the people of Ontario. I only hope that we can live up to the standard that they have set for us yet again.

I want to commend public health officials for leading the fight, for keeping people informed, for their courage, their commitment, their competence and, perhaps most of all, their sense of calm in a storm. I want to thank front line health care workers for their tireless, selfless efforts. What firefighters were to New York City on September 11, nurses and doctors were to Toronto in the spring of 2003.

In a word, those nurses and doctors are heroes. What makes their heroism even more remarkable is that we have put them through a lot over the last several years. But when we asked them to do even more, they said, "Of course we will because saving lives is what we do." They do it every single day, quietly, anonymously and professionally. But we have just been reminded in a very dramatic way how precious those people are to us. Let no one ever suggest that a nurse in a hospital is redundant. Let no one ever suggest that a nurse in a hospital is anything but precious.

I want to congratulate as well the many members of the Chinese-Canadian community who were at times and unfairly singled out. They could have lashed out, but instead they reached out, and people responded with reason and intelligence instead of ignorance.

Finally, I want to mention the thousands of business people and working families directly affected by the economic fallout. Sometimes I think it is difficult for us to understand just how far-reaching the economic fallout has been.

1600

Yesterday I had the opportunity to visit the two compounds at Pearson airport. I passed through the airport, as I have for 13 years at least twice a week, where I frequently get into a car and am driven to Queen's Park. I had the opportunity to meet with a number of the drivers, and they are hurting. Business is down close to 70%, yet they have their fixed expenses. It costs about \$150 every single day. These drivers work very, very long shifts. They sometimes work for 24 hours. They sleep, of course, during part of that, because they've got to do a lot of waiting—waiting to be called. Anyway, what many of them conveyed to me was that they were not even able to meet their daily fixed expenses, and yet of course they're raising families. They've got kids to feed and rent or mortgages to pay.

We have a responsibility to help those people and all the others who are out there who, while not that visible, I'm sure their pain and anguish are very, very real. I think we have to help them in any way that we can, and when I say "we," I mean all levels of government.

Almost three weeks ago, I wrote to the Prime Minister. In my letter I asked the federal government to work with the provincial and municipal governments to help the individuals and businesses hurt by this crisis. I was pleased last week to see that money is finally beginning to flow.

That said, more must be done, and we in our party will continue to pressure both the Prime Minister and Ontario's Premier to ensure that more is in fact done.

I want to read for you and for the people watching at home the motion that I've introduced and that we are debating today, notwithstanding that I just read it, because I think it's important that people understand what it is we are in fact debating. It reads as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly supports the establishment of a commission of inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act to investigate the SARS outbreak and provide recommendations on how best to prevent and respond to such an outbreak in the future."

The reason for this motion is as simple as it is important. We simply must learn what we did right and what we did wrong fighting SARS so that we are better prepared if and when something similar happens again.

We believe that in this matter our future can and should be guided by our past. I don't think there can be a better example of that than the Walkerton tragedy. Following the Walkerton disaster and after a bit of encouragement from this side of the House, then-Premier

Harris established a public inquiry, and in so doing, he appointed a respected judge to head up that inquiry. I believe the results of that process were an overwhelming success. What Justice O'Connor gave us was a road map—a road map to protect our drinking water and improve our public health networks. So powerful and so legitimate was the inquiry process that all three parties were quick to embrace its recommendations.

Some wrongly equate the calling of an inquiry as a political exercise; in fact, it is quite the opposite. My friends on the other side of the House know it's true that no one from any political party, no editorial board and no victims' group ever accused Justice O'Connor of playing politics with his inquiry. In fact, a public inquiry process keeps the politics out. When there is a public inquiry, politicians can't fiddle with its work. They can't edit out embarrassing mistakes or manipulate witness lists, for example. Most importantly, they discount or dismiss the findings of a public inquiry at their peril.

Public inquiries give us facts on what happened in the past, and they give us valuable recommendations for the future. They give the public the answers that they desire and to which I believe they are entitled.

Now, I know the Premier doesn't want a public inquiry. Instead, he's promising some sort of internal review. I'm pleased to see that the Minister of Health is present as I speak to this matter. I'm hoping that he will reflect upon the debate today, and that he will be able to convince the Premier otherwise.

I say to the Premier that conducting an internal review is not good enough. After serving more than 20 years in this place, I think he knows that. He knows that a private review is very, very different from a public inquiry.

Under the Public Inquiries Act, the commissioner is given important powers. For example, a public inquiry provides whistle-blower protection to ensure people can't be fired for sharing their personal experiences. It allows the commissioner to summon witnesses to give testimony under oath. It empowers the commissioner to subpoena physical evidence and other documents.

I believe that we need to know everything about where our public health system succeeded and where it failed, because experts tell us that we will likely face this kind of thing again.

The West Nile virus is already here in Ontario. While SARS is on its way out, other diseases will be around the corner, threatening our families and our future prosperity. Were we ready? Are we ready now? There's a consensus building amongst the experts that we were not ready then or now.

I think it's important to draw a distinction—and I tried to make this in the House yesterday—between the magnificent way in which our front-line health care workers rose to the challenge and performed heroically. Of that, there is simply no question, and our hats are off to all of those people.

But there is another issue, and that's what today's debate is all about. It's about our state of readiness in the province of Ontario to grapple with these kinds of

challenges. It's about whether we're doing everything that we can and should be doing to support our front-line workers as they rise to the challenge before them.

Let me quote from some of the experts in this matter. Dr William Bowie is the head of the infectious disease program at UBC. According to Dr Bowie, "SARS was an accident waiting to happen." He says, "...because of the priorities of the government, the cost-cutting measures, the conditions were great for SARS to take hold." Dr Bowie was one of the people we had to turn to because, less than two years ago, this government fired our own experts. But I'll talk about that a bit more in a few minutes.

What conditions did Dr Bowie find in Ontario's public health system when he got here? He said, "They had to start from scratch. Ontario doesn't seem able to pull together an integrated effort, either for pandemic planning or to deal with bioterrorism. It's gotten progressively worse. Advice has been ignored for a long time."

Dr Allison McGeer is the head of infection control at Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital. She happened to be one of the key members of the SARS containment team. This is what she said: "It's been very clear to us that we were going to pay for the public health dismantling that has happened under the provincial and municipal governments."

Neal denHollander was the gentleman who headed the provincial lab's standards and development section, right up until 2001. This is what he had to say about public health under the Harris-Eves government: "I saw the public health labs and the public health units being underfunded and undersupported and being dismantled from the inside out. I didn't want to be any part of that."

Dr Susan Richardson, the head of microbiology at Sick Kids, said that the lack of provincial resources meant that it was up to her colleague, Dr Raymond Tellier, to develop on his own a diagnostic test for the coronavirus behind SARS. "The ability to respond to this outbreak came from the efforts of individuals," Dr Richardson said. According to Dr Richardson, the fact that Dr Tellier worked day and night on his own initiative using their hospital lab was "the only reason that we have survived this outbreak against all odds."

1610

I think we have a serious problem on our hands, when we have to rely on the goodwill and the volunteerism of people in the context of a huge challenge. I think we need to have the institutional capacity to grapple with these kinds of things.

I think everybody in this House is familiar with the work of Dr Donald Low. This man's fight with the disease was more than professional. For a time it was also personal, as he, like many other health care professionals, was forced into quarantine after being exposed to the SARS virus.

Listen to what Dr Low had to say. "We needed a centralized agency within the province to handle this sort of thing. We needed somebody in charge who had the authority to make decisions and the resources to do what



had to be done to carry them out. Instead we were borrowing and begging to carry out a proper investigation.”

Dr. Sheela Basrur's leadership was key during this outbreak. As Toronto's public Medical Officer of Health, she knows far too well the challenges faced by our front-line health care workers during this crisis.

This is what she had to say: “We would try to beg, borrow or steal staff from other health units who could voluntarily come to Toronto and help out for a week or two and then go back to their home base. It's like ripping the bandage off one wound to stop the bleeding of another one.”

In another interview she stated, “It's called ‘surge capacity,’ and that is something that has been systematically stripped from the system ... so the ability of public health, of hospitals, of governments in general to respond to an unforeseen crisis of large proportions is dramatically reduced when we have already cut ourselves to the bone.”

Has the Harris-Eves government learned any lessons from SARS? Dr Basrur tells us that if the throne speech is any indication, the answer is an unqualified no. This is what she said: “I challenge you to find any mention of public health in there. We're in the middle of a wake-up call and people are still sleeping.”

Saturday's *Globe and Mail* reminds us that just 16 months before SARS hit, the Harris government laid off the last of its leading lab scientists and dismissed the prospect of any new disease threatening the province.

“Do we want five people sitting around waiting for work to arrive?” That was the Minister of Health's \$300,000-a-year spokesperson's declaration. He continued, “It would be highly unlikely that we would find a new organism in Ontario.”

How wrong he was. We've now learned that these organisms, these bugs can travel just as fast as international travellers do. By way of comparison, the state of New York has 150 scientists on the payroll. I'm not talking about lab technicians or scientists, effective though they may be, working at our hospitals devoting themselves to other responsibilities, who we might call upon at the last instant. I'm talking about institutional capacity. New York's got 150, and to the best of my knowledge, we have none. Not a single one.

We need an inquiry to make sure that we get this right, to make sure that mistakes of the kind described by the experts I've just quoted don't happen again. As Dr Bowie himself said this week from British Columbia, “SARS is a tragedy. But it would be a much worse tragedy for Canadians not to learn from the lessons we can take from this.”

So I'm saying to members, as we debate and vote on this important motion, let us not forget that many people have suffered. Some have suffered the loss of a loved one. Long after news of SARS has receded from the front pages and the newscasts, long after our health care system and our economy has recovered, they will still feel that loss. Some 23 people died in Canada, all of them

in our province. They were our friends, our family, our people, and we mourn their passing—23; 23 too many. Yet, this loss could have been much greater if it were not for the tireless work of so many. It could have been worse.

With that in mind, we all share a very heavy responsibility to learn from this tragedy. The passage of this motion and the holding of a public inquiry will help us do just that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** It's a pleasure for me to participate in this debate. I want to say at the outset that on behalf of myself and my NDP colleagues, I want to thank those Ontarians who were very much responsible for getting this outbreak finally under control. That includes all of those nurses, those paramedics, those firefighters, police, Toronto public health, all of the community organizations which supported those in quarantine and those who went into voluntary quarantine and stayed there as they should have. Our thanks to all of those who responded. It's clear to me that without their exceptional efforts, the extent of this outbreak and the number of deaths would have been much larger; there is no doubt in my mind about that. Thank goodness for their exceptional efforts. But I think no community, and I use “community” in the broadest sense, should ever be faced with such a health threat. We have to ensure that the community, in the broadest sense of the word, here in Ontario is never faced with a threat again.

So that is why three weeks ago, on April 15, our leader Howard Hampton held a press conference in the media studio here at Queen's Park and called on Premier Ernie Eves to commit to a commission of inquiry into Ontario's response to SARS. He was very clear that this should be done after the outbreak ended, obviously, but he was very clear that it should be done.

I think it's appropriate that I read into the record for those who are watching the letter which our leader sent to the Premier that day, April 15, three weeks ago, calling on him to support a public inquiry and also outlining the framework for that particular inquiry. It reads as follows:

“Dear Premier,

“The last few weeks have been extraordinarily difficult ones for many Ontarians. From the families that have lost loved ones, to the thousands living under quarantine, to the health care workers that have worked endless hours to contain the SARS outbreak, the impact of SARS has been all-consuming.

“New Democrats have expressed our sincere condolences to those who have lost family and friends to this terrible illness. We also commend those health care workers, nurses, doctors, public health officials, for their enormous efforts to contain this outbreak.

“It is certainly at times like this that we appreciate more than ever the importance of our public health care system, and the central role that government must play in protecting our public services.

“I believe the people of Ontario are looking to you for assurance that once SARS is contained, you will call an

independent commission of inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act to ensure that we learn from this experience. We must be assured that if an outbreak like this occurs again, our system will be even better prepared.

"Many questions are being asked by experts and health care providers and by many of our constituents about how prepared Ontario has been and what other jurisdictions may have done differently. I believe the following issues should be included in the commission of inquiry:"

First, "the capacity of our public health units to respond and the effect on their ability to carry out other important prevention programs;"

Second, "Ontario's infection control capacity;"

Third, "the capacity of our health care system—in particular our hospitals—to cope with the additional burden of SARS;"

Fourth, "the coordination and speed with which directives and alerts were issued by the Ministry of Health;"

Fifth, "jurisdiction over private clinics (independent health facilities) during this crisis;"

Sixth, "the technical and scientific capacity of the public health branch of the Ministry of Health, particularly the capacity of our public labs;"

Seventh, "the role of the federal government in providing support for public health."

"Premier, there is no doubt that at this time, all our efforts should be focused on containing the outbreak, treating the sick, and ensuring that those under quarantine have all the supports they need to be fully compliant. That is why the NDP has continued to put forward positive suggestions such as supports for quarantined workers, a compensation plan, and a plan to help businesses in the Chinese community."

"Assuring the public that there will be a commission of inquiry is another positive step forward."

"Sincerely yours,"

"Howard Hampton," leader of the Ontario NDP.

1620

On April 15, the day we called on the Premier to hold a public inquiry, a similar letter was also forwarded to Dr Colin D'Cunha, the public health commissioner, and to Dr James Young, the commissioner of public security, asking them as well to be supportive for a public inquiry once the SARS epidemic was under control.

I regret to say that we haven't had a response to our request from three weeks ago, April 15. It appears that the government is not interested in a public inquiry; the government is going to do some lesser kind of formal review, which is not appropriate, and I'll respond to that in a few moments.

I say that three weeks ago this government should have responded promptly to our request for a public inquiry. We should be here today assuring people that that will be done.

I want to look at some of the points we raised in terms of what should be included in a public inquiry so I can put on the record some of the concerns we have and what

we think the inquiry should look at, because more than anything else, we should use the public inquiry as an opportunity to ensure that never again do we put the community, generally speaking, under such a threat as it has been with respect to SARS.

The first point: the capacity of Ontario public health units to respond to SARS and carry out other important prevention activities. The fact of the matter is that our public health units, particularly in Toronto, have been put under enormous pressure to respond to SARS. I was at a briefing with the Ministry of Health where it was made very clear by the deputy minister, by Dr D'Cunha, that in fact Ontario at that point was in a position of trying to hire right across Ontario because there wasn't enough capacity in Toronto, that they were trying to hire students from university to be on the phones to do the calling, that in fact they were stretched to the limit in trying to respond. That's a fact.

We have a situation where in the last couple of years public health units have not been able to do all that needs to be done with respect to public health. My own public health unit has to subsidize the Healthy Babies program because they do not receive enough funding from this government to fully carry out their mandate. My own health unit has to subsidize the cost for the flu shot program because this government does not provide the funds necessary to make sure that program works adequately.

There are a number of other public health programs that municipalities have to subsidize because this government hasn't stepped up to the plate to ensure that the funds are in place and the human resources are in place to ensure that public health units can do the important work that has to be done. We should fully examine the gap between what public health units are mandated to do and what this government provides in terms of funds to actually allow them to do that job, and that should be examined under a public inquiry.

The next point was Ontario's capacity to control infection, and that's an important point. We received an e-mail message from Dr Ronald Gold, who is professor emeritus of pediatrics, faculty of medicine, University of Toronto, former chief, division of infectious disease, at the Hospital for Sick Children. His question was the following: what will be done to ensure that there is not another failure by the Ontario Ministry of Health to issue a timely warning to medical facilities throughout Canada at the risk of importation of a new infection such as SARS? He points out:

"News of the outbreak of an unexplained phenomenon in Hong Kong was posted on the Web site of ProMED-mail and distributed via e-mail ... February 12 and 15. ProMED-mail is a program of the International Society for Infectious Diseases which collects reports of outbreaks of human, animal and plant infections around the world. When the first reports of the unexplained" phenomenon "which became SARS were posted, the health ministry in BC notified all hospitals and health care facilities of the possibility of a traveler from Hong



Kong arriving" with "this new infection. When the first case (and subsequent cases) presented" themselves "to the emergency department of a Vancouver hospital, the patient was immediately isolated and managed with infection-control procedures appropriate for a respiratory infection.

"No such warning was issued by the Ontario Ministry of Health. Failure to warn Toronto hospitals of the possibility of importation of SARS resulted in the subsequent spread of the epidemic after the first case was hospitalized and not properly isolated on March 7....

"Vancouver (and Vietnam) provided good examples of how such imported infections should be handled in order to prevent epidemics; Toronto (and Ontario) provided an excellent example of how not to do it."

I think Dr Gold's concerns should be investigated through a public inquiry. But Dr Gold also raised another concern, and this was dealt with in our third point, which should be included in the public inquiry: the capacity of Ontario's health care system, hospitals in particular, to cope with the burden of SARS. He's made it clear that we should be looking at whether or not Ontario hospitals have adequate funds to hire the recommended number of certified infection control nurse practitioners. He raises this point:

"Current recommendations call for one infection control practitioner for every 220 to 250 beds in a hospital. Very few Ontario hospitals meet this goal. Such practitioners are essential for proper surveillance of hospital-acquired infections as well as for proper implementation of infection control policies and procedures and, most importantly, for ongoing training of all hospital workers in infection-control practices. Without proper infection control, spread of infections such as SARS is inevitable.

"Continued shortchanging of public health, in particular, and of the health care system in general is a recipe for disaster."

This message, again, was sent to us by Dr Gold, who has some very excellent credentials to speak about these matters. Whether or not our hospitals have the workers in place to deal with infection is another issue that should be dealt with through a public inquiry.

Our fourth issue involved the coordination and speed with which directives and alerts were issued by the Ministry of Health. The fact of the matter is these weren't very prompt at all, despite the work that was done to try and get this under control. It was March 7 when Dr Finkelstein diagnosed a patient with pneumonia at a hospital in Ontario. He had not received any official warnings of a flu-like illness breaking out in China. The sick man was not isolated immediately and spent 24 hours in an emergency room, where a patient next to him became infected. It was not until March 25 that the Ontario health minister made SARS a reportable virulent communicable disease under Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act. On October 31, Ontario action plans for emergency response procedures came together. The first directives that went out to hospitals went out March

27, provincial directives to all acute care hospitals on how to deal with SARS, what procedures had to be undertaken. The directives for GTA and Simcoe county acute hospitals went out on March 29, and interim directives went out March 31.

The first case was March 7. The first set of directives went out March 27, 20 days later. We need to have a public inquiry to examine why it is that directives and alerts were not issued in a timely fashion to Ontario acute care hospitals. That goes for the other directives that were issued as well. There were directives finally issued April 1 with respect to inter-facility patient transfer, a directive that went out to physicians April 2 on how to deal with potential outbreaks in outpatient settings. I think a public inquiry would discover that that kind of response time was just far too long. The only way we are going to get to that is through a public inquiry.

We've looked at other items as well. I mentioned the private clinics, the technical and scientific capacity of Ontario's private labs and the public health branch of Ontario's Ministry of Health. Well, the sad reality is that we don't have much of a capacity left any more because this government laid off all of the Ministry of Health lab scientists on October 18, 2001. We should be looking at that decision, why it was made, how it was made and what Ontario has to do to have adequate capacity in the public health system in order to deal with outbreaks like SARS and other infectious diseases.

1630

We're also concerned about the role of the federal government. We want an investigation of their commitment to public health, whether or not, as more money is provided to various provinces, including our own, for health care, some of that should in fact not be targeted, designated essentially for public health so we can support our public health units in this province.

As I said, that request was made to this Premier on October 15. Instead of agreeing to a public inquiry, what this Premier and this Minister of Health have done is suggest that they will have some kind of formal review into how the province handled the SARS outbreak. I say to you, Speaker, that is just not good enough. Under a public inquiry, the experts will have the decision about what the mandate and framework of that public inquiry will be. The experts will be able to subpoena anyone and everyone who needs to come and talk about what they knew when and what else should be done. The experts will be able to subpoena all documentation that led to decisions that were made or that resulted in delays of decisions that should have been made. I'm not confident at all in a formal review because I'm not confident the government will do what has to be done to have the broadest public look at how Ontario responded with respect to SARS.

So I say again to the minister who is here today, to the Premier to whom I hope this message will be transmitted, we made a very specific request to your government on April 15, three weeks ago. We asked you to call a public inquiry. Do the right thing. Deal with the concerns people

have. Go that extra step and ensure we use a full public inquiry as an opportunity to guarantee that our public health services are in good shape and that the community will never be asked to respond again in the exceptional way they have had to in order to deal with SARS.

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** It's been almost two months now since all of us in Ontario were first introduced, if I can be euphemistic, to SARS. To be exact, it was 54 days ago that our lives would be forever changed and our definition of normal in the health care system forever shifted.

On March 14, Ontario was confronted with a new challenge, a new disease, a foreign entity that had a potentially devastating impact, a disease that had no cure and no vaccine. At that time, little was known of SARS. There was no road map to follow; there was no precedent to guide our next move. But what we did know was that our actions must be swift, immediate, definite. We knew we could, if we rose to our best, overcome this emergency.

I say this because the province has the best and the brightest health care workers as the backbone of our health care system. Although it has taken a tragedy such as SARS for the people of this province to collectively come together to thank the health care workers for all they have done, our government has long believed the foundation was in place for our health care system to meet any challenge. SARS tested that belief and showed that, with the right people in the right places doing the right things, we could overcome anything.

Our government has spent the last eight years building a health care system from the bottom up. Previous governments just didn't put into place human resources plans that would attract and retain the very best health care professionals as a matter of course. Consultations with doctors, nurses and other health care professionals gave us an idea of what needed to be done to make sure that Ontario had a health care system that worked at its best when we needed it the most. To ensure this, our government joined with all Ontarians to tell doctors and nurses that we did want them to stay here, and we wanted them to stay in Ontario to work here and to raise their families.

It has taken eight years to turn an outdated health care system into one comprised of state-of-the-art facilities, equipped with the latest and greatest technology and staffed by the smartest and most talented doctors, nurses and other health care professionals—health care professionals, I might add, who have put their health on the line day in and day out to protect us all and meet this epidemic head-on; health care professionals who have felt the loss first hand of 23 patients whose lives were lost in the battle against SARS. I want to take this opportunity to express my deepest sympathy and remorse to the families of those victims.

Although one life lost is too many, Ontario has been successful in meeting the challenge that SARS has posed to us. We have worked together—doctors, nurses, volunteers, police, firefighters and other health care, emer-

gency and public health professionals—as a team, working together to fight SARS. And I can say we are winning that fight and we are defeating this disease. That opinion is not just my own. It is mirrored by the World Health Organization; it is mirrored by the people of Ontario, by politicians from both sides of the Legislature, and by health care authorities across the globe.

In a recent article that appeared in the *Toronto Star* titled “SARS Response Called Triumph of Public Health,” a top mathematical epidemiologist stated that the actions Ontarians took to fight SARS have been unprecedented. They were actions that turned the SARS outbreak in this province from a potential catastrophe infecting some 200,000 people to a crisis affecting only just more than 300 people. That is less than one fifth of 1% of the predicted damage that Ontario could have felt, because of a swift and immediate response by a health care system that was built to work at its best when we needed it the most.

It is quite an accomplishment and success that could not have been reached if not for the dedicated and committed health care professionals in this province, an accomplishment that would not have been realized if leadership was not demonstrated, leadership that eased the fears that Ontarians were feeling and led to results that not only saved the province but I dare say saved the nation.

I would like to speak not only of the leadership of so many doctors and nurses and other medical professionals but also the leadership of Premier Ernie Eves. Premier Eves, on March 26, declared a provincial state emergency, giving health care professionals the tools they needed to combat SARS and stop it before it could spread into the community.

It was leadership that saw the implementation of an action plan that would limit the effects that SARS would have in Ontario, an action plan that would contain SARS and make sure those who had been exposed to it were cared for in an isolated environment, protecting the lives of all other Ontarians.

Under the leadership of Premier Eves, emergency services admissions and non-urgent services at hospitals have been temporarily suspended at hospitals across the province, while visitors into those buildings have also been restricted in an effort to prevent the transmission of SARS.

Under the leadership of Premier Eves, Toronto public health followed up with all Scarborough Grace division patients discharged from March 16 onwards, as well as students, volunteers and staff who might have had direct contact with SARS.

Under Premier Eves's leadership, SARS became a reportable, virulent, communicable disease under Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act, allowing public health officers the opportunity to track its movement and issue orders to stop infected people from engaging in activities that may transmit SARS.

**1640**

Under the leadership of Premier Eves, York Central Hospital and Scarborough Grace Hospital were tempor-



arily closed down because it was the right thing to do to stop the spread of SARS. And under the leadership of Premier Eves, a SARS treatment centre was established at the Women's College campus of Sunnybrook and Women's hospital and a provincial operations running at full steam 24 hours a day, seven days a week was created to provide assistance to health care professionals and Ontarians across this province.

These were steps that our Premier and our government knew had to be taken, and we didn't hesitate, because public health is a top priority of our government. These steps demonstrated that our government's leadership, when leadership was essential to keep morale high in our communities, would be given.

I want to reiterate that our government, in collaboration with the 37 provincial public health units, did everything that we could do to combat SARS. Anything and everything was done. I assure you that as we move forward, we will do whatever it takes to defeat SARS and make it tomorrow's news.

On top of all of the steps just mentioned, our government offered the people of Ontario transparency and the knowledge that ensured that every Ontarian could self-identify SARS and take the appropriate actions to contain it.

In terms of transparency, practically every day, at the same time, at the same location, daily updates were given to the press and to their audiences. Ontarians were kept abreast of everything, including the unfortunate news of one passing away, but also news of those being discharged from the hospitals because they were well.

Indeed, today I can share some news with you, numbers that show this province's success in controlling SARS continues. Ten days ago, 41 people were identified as active probable cases in our hospitals. Yesterday that number decreased to 29. Ten days ago, 150 people were discharged from the hospital after receiving quality compassionate care from our doctors and nurses. That number has been added to, to create a total number today of 179. These numbers and the trends they depict were readily available when I recently travelled to Geneva to discuss the travel advisory on Toronto that the World Health Organization declared.

Thanks to health care professionals, who continue to work around the clock, these statistics and other impressive identified trends allowed the World Health Organization to realize that the new news was that the warning, the advisory, was no longer necessary. Thanks to the actions taken by the Premier and by Toronto public health and York public health and many other officials, and thanks to the individual efforts that each Ontarian undertook, that ban was lifted on April 29. I mention again that I was just the messenger of the hard work of many, many people.

In terms of educating the public and providing them with the knowledge necessary to be active defenders in our battle against SARS, a number of initiatives were undertaken to provide Ontarians with the tools they needed to identify and contain SARS.

Personally, I had the pleasure of demonstrating how to properly wash one's hands when it became known that such a simple action such as handwashing could be an effective preventive measure in stopping the transmission of SARS.

On top of this, advertising in all forms of media have helped inform the public about preventive measures that can be taken and the numbers to be called. Accessible phone numbers like Telehealth and a dedicated SARS info line were a phone call away for all Ontarians, phone numbers that at a time were dialled by more than 15,000 Ontarians a day—15,000 a day. Ontarians were then told about the symptoms and were provided with the knowledge to make a decision on whether voluntary isolation or quarantine were necessary steps to take.

A high level of public co-operation has allowed us to contain SARS to this day, and I want to thank and commend every Ontarian for putting the health of the people ahead of personal interests.

By citing these examples, I'm just reiterating the actions that told the people of Ontario that our government was in control of fighting, containing and defeating SARS.

As our government realized that more could be done, we didn't hesitate to continue. Recently, in response to the social and economic effects of SARS, Premier Eves announced a range of additional measures needed to combat SARS. They included providing more than \$118 million, part of which will help fund a two-year tourism recovery plan to rebuild global confidence that Toronto is the place for families and friends to visit, and \$25 million for hospitals across the province to help address surgical backlogs caused by SARS.

Furthermore, the Premier recently announced the SARS Assistance and Recovery Strategy Act, a bill that was passed this sitting that includes protecting the jobs of people affected by SARS, those who voluntarily quarantined or isolated themselves, strengthening the powers available to front-line health care workers to deal with this type of outbreak, and assisting the tourism sector in its recovery, especially hotels which have felt the economic effects of SARS.

Today we live in what I have referred to in the past as the "new normal." Although we are currently on the road to defeating this disease, we must not sit on our laurels. We must learn from this experience so that we can be prepared for future diseases that will come to our borders in due time. To ensure that our government is prepared for tomorrow, a review of the health care system's response to SARS will be conducted which will assess the capacity and the capability of our health care system, in case diseases like dengue fever or some other tropical disease or some other pandemic comes to Ontario.

As I close, I know that my words spoken here today may not be remembered years from now, and perhaps by some members may not be remembered tomorrow. But what will be remembered are the heroics of our health care professionals and the vigilance that will ensue. I want to reiterate just how important it is, and how



beneficial for us that we live today and tomorrow with vigilance.

Together, we will learn from this experience to be prepared for tomorrow's surprise and tomorrow's unexpected challenge. No less can be expected of us by the people of Ontario.

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** I have a brief time to speak in this debate, and I want to say right at the outset that the oratory of the Minister of Health is excellent, but I think the last line he said was that we must prepare for tomorrow's eventualities. The fact of the matter is that in this very same place about two years ago, following 9/11, we heard a lot of talk from the government about preparation as a result of bioterrorism. Unfortunately, too many people who are involved in the health care system in Ontario, front-line workers that I've had the opportunity to speak with and many people who have been quoted in this place today by my leader, Dalton McGuinty, find that Ontario's preparation for what happened with the SARS outbreak was not adequate.

It is not to say that we don't have an enormous amount of respect for health care. We stand and fight for those values every single day. But I see that the attempt on the part of the Minister of the Health is to hide behind the front-line workers and the experiences and the effort that they put into this, and not to take enough responsibility for the fact that there have been some very, very serious problems highlighted with respect to our health care system and its capacity to respond to a complicated problem like SARS.

I've had the opportunity to talk to front-line workers, because my office is in a building where St Michael's has 20 doctors. They're still in masks and gowns there, and their experience from this has been problematic. They need an opportunity to be heard, not in some process that allows just those voices from associations and hospital CEOs to speak up, but a process that allows front-line health workers to participate in a commission of inquiry that is independent, thorough and, above all else, transparent.

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We owe it to ourselves and to the society that we are part of to make sure that we do learn all of the lessons that can be learned from a review that allows all of those people to have a voice. We need to know what the effect was of our lack of epidemiological capacity within our provincial labs. We need to know what the problems were that occurred with respect to the communication of information. I've never seen in my life, around politics for 25 years, an issue that moved more rapidly than this one. I've heard very serious concerns raised from many different fronts about the capacity of the Ministry of Health to promptly inform people across the breadth of our health care system. We've got to get a good look into what were the infrastructure problems that existed at various hospitals, in terms of being able to control airborne problems.

So I don't stand and make comments in the interest of trying to raise some political benefit, but I do very much

say that, as one Ontarian who has a very large proportion of life sciences and health care workers in my riding, that I do think it's critically important that at a time and age where we know that there will be more complex situations like this that confront us, we take every advantage that we can, that we reach out to all of those who have a voice and we hear of their problems and we take them seriously and we act to address those concerns, not in some review where nobody knows who's asking what questions and under what mandate, but under a commission of inquiry that is independent, thorough and transparent. Only then can we be certain that all of the lessons that are to be learned have been learned to ensure that our capacity to protect our citizens is enhanced to the greatest extent possible. That's what we're calling for.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** It almost feels surreal standing here today talking about SARS now in the context of doing a review, an investigation, an inquiry into how well Toronto, and all of us, handled the crisis, because indeed at the time it was a major catastrophe, a living nightmare for those of us in Toronto who had many of our constituents affected by the SARS outbreak. I know that in my riding of Toronto-Danforth there is east Chinatown. The small businesses there were severely affected by the outbreak and continue to be affected negatively to this day. So there's a whole other side to the SARS outbreak and the implications to us as a community, and that is that, first and foremost, and we all agree and appreciate, is containing it, that people's health came first.

As we dealt with this crisis day after day after day in many different ways, some of us working quietly behind the scenes, I know that many of the media said to me, "You're not your usual partisan self, Marilyn. You're not out attacking the government on a daily basis." I believe that throughout the crisis overall, for the first few weeks when people were dying and more and more people were getting sick and businesses were failing, all of us tried to contain and put aside those partisan differences and concerns, because we knew that this was a situation where all of the parties and all of the people of Ontario needed to work together to contain the disease. That was the number one priority. So I appreciate the minister's comments today, and any efforts that he made and his government made. I have, in fact, thanked them for the economic package that they recently outlined.

I want to say to everybody from all three parties, some who are more vocal than others, others working behind the scenes doing what they could within their own communities and within the city of Toronto to deal with various aspects of this, that it is in times like these, and we've all said this, that we appreciate more than ever our public health care system. Unfortunately, it took an incident like this to make us remember the important, vital role our public health units play in our lives. We often take them for granted because a major role they play is working behind the scenes, keeping us and our communities healthy.



I want to thank Dr Sheela Basrur, Toronto's medical officer of health, all of the public health workers from Toronto and the greater Toronto area and, indeed, from across the province, who came to our aid in our great need. They did a tremendous job. I want to make it clear, over and over again, as we thank our health care workers and our professionals for the great job that they did, that we mean that from the bottom of our hearts. When we're asking for an inquiry, as sometimes might have been implied by the government, we're by no means criticizing the great work that our health providers did.

I do want to spend a few minutes talking about the economic impact because that is something that had a huge impact on our community, and continues to. I know that many people took the opportunity, as described by some, to take advantage of the situation, I suppose, and show up at a Chinese restaurant and have lunch for a photo op.

I know that on April 4, I went to the Pearl Court Restaurant in my community in south Riverdale, and invited the Premier and other ministers to join me. They were unavailable at that time, but did send the Minister of Citizenship. We appreciated that very much.

I also brought an entire community with me. We packed the restaurant that day because that was at the beginning of the heightened fears. People stopped coming to shop in Chinatown and stopped coming to eat in the restaurants. We were seeing our businesses losing 80% to 90% to 95% of their customers. They were dying.

So we did that. We also, along with my colleague Rosario Marchese and our leader Howard Hampton, met on April 14 with representatives from the Chinese-Canadian business owners and talked about remedies. We came out of that meeting with recommendations that the government did not adopt.

We later met with representatives from the hotel and restaurant union to talk about the profound negative economic impact that the SARS crisis was having, and is still having, on their workers. We came up with some recommendations for the government to help those workers in their time of need.

The government eventually did come up with an economic package that went some distance in terms of dealing with some of the economic crisis. But, unfortunately, the people who have been left hanging out to dry are still those small businesses and those hotel and restaurant workers. They're the people who are still suffering greatly, because either they're having their days going to work in the restaurant or the hotel cut, or, as in terms of the Chinese small businesses—indeed, it's now far more than the Chinese small businesses. The trickle-down effect is affecting many of our businesses across our communities.

We urge the government, and I'm urging the government yet again today, to bring in some of those measures because, indeed, we suggest, and still do, that this crisis in the small business community be treated as a disaster.

We're urging again today something that we urged weeks ago and still has not been done: that hydro and

natural gas providers delay cutting off services to impacted workers and small businesses and that they pay when they can with remedies attached to that so they won't be penalized down the road when they are paying overdue bills.

**1700**

We also asked for support for small businesses and impacted workers who are tenants, if threatened with eviction. We asked for changes to the Ontario disaster relief assistance program so that the smaller business that may not be assisted by other elements of the program can receive assistance. I do want to point out that, as I understand it, the government's Bill 1 could enable this to happen, but it still has not enacted it.

The NDP members, along with our leader, met with the hotel and restaurant employees' union. We worked with them; I spent many hours on the telephone talking to Paul Clifford, the head of that union, trying to come up with ideas that wouldn't cost the hundreds of billions of dollars that the Premier said when he was asked if he would help small business and these workers but would be a modest doable plan, both on the disaster relief for those businesses most affected to help tide them over, but also for the assistance that we have been asking, and still ask, for those hotel and restaurant workers. What we came up with was, I think, a very good plan, and that is that Human Resources Development Canada, HRDC, make emergency work-sharing EI funds available to Toronto's tourism industry and relax the eligibility requirements so that the industry workers could qualify.

We asked that the city of Toronto economic development plan call for labour market readiness in the hospitality industry. We asked that the federal, provincial and city governments work together to allow the workers in hotels and restaurants, on the days that they're not called in, to go for training or to have their skills upgraded under an existing program within EI, where the federal EI program would pay 85% of their wages. What we asked the provincial government to do is to top those wages up 15% so that all of those workers would be receiving their usual salary. We have not seen action on that yet.

In conclusion, I want to say yet again to members of the government—and I'm glad to say, by the way, the city of Toronto did adopt fully the hotel and restaurant workers' recommendations—they still need our help. We're all hoping and praying that we've come to the end of this terrible disease, but in the meantime it's going to take some time for those businesses in the Chinese community and throughout our communities overall and for those hotel and restaurant workers to be able to recover from such an economic catastrophe. So we call on the government to not forget those workers, to not forget those small businesses; while they negotiate with doctors in this province and others to try to compensate them, to not forget those people who are in dire need and those most economically impacted by this terrible disease.

I do want to say, once again, that the NDP leader called for an inquiry three weeks ago. At that time, of

course, our main concern, as I said before, was to make sure that the health care issues were taken care of first and that this terrible disease be contained. We do need an inquiry for all of the reasons outlined by other speakers, including Ms Martel, our health critic for the New Democratic Party.

We do know that it's quite possible—we've been told that with global warming and the greenhouse gas problems we have that we may see other terrible diseases that we don't even know about, can't even dream about, come into this province. We have to be better prepared. We do have to look at the cuts and all of the other things that have happened with the downloading of our public health units to the municipalities. We have to be clear and sure, whatever comes our way again, that we are better prepared than we were this time.

I would call upon the government to not see this call as a partisan call to get them. I don't believe that anybody in this Legislature wants to take that approach, and I don't believe the people of Ontario want to see any of us taking that approach. What they want to see is all of us working together to come up with the best plan possible so that, should such an outbreak happen again, we are better prepared to deal with it.

**Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I am certainly pleased to join this very important debate. Let me start by saying that our hearts and our thoughts are with the families of those who tragically lost loved ones as a result of this deadly disease. I also want to say that our prayers are with those who have become ill, some of whom are still in hospital.

No effort, from day one, has been spared or will be spared to fight SARS in Ontario. I also want to say at the outset that we have indeed seen great leadership, balanced leadership, reasoned decisions made by Premier Eves and by the health minister, Tony Clement, and I want to take a moment to personally thank them and thank them on behalf of my constituents.

Before we move on from the thank yous, let me also of course thank the real heroes, the men and women who got up every morning in spite of the fact that they were likely to face a threat that may have taken their lives, may have harmed their loved ones. But they nevertheless awoke each and every morning, went to work and treated patients. As a result, they saved many lives and they contained this deadly disease. I say to the men and women, those health professionals, whether they are nurses or doctors or technicians or receptionists in hospitals or volunteers at the front desk, that we owe them a great debt of gratitude.

SARS has had a very significant impact upon this province and indeed upon this great country. More than 10,000 residents have been asked to isolate themselves to protect others. One of those 10,000 was my youngest daughter, my 12-year-old daughter, who is fine but did receive that call from the public health department. They asked that she be quarantined for the remaining part of what was a 10-day period. She, of course, complied and stayed away from school and fortunately is fine. We had

that same experience; we had that caring, informative conversation with the public health official that had obviously a very significant effect upon our family. That happened not once, not twice, of course, but 10,000 times across this province.

It's estimated as well that one third of Ontario businesses have been hurt by the impact of SARS. Of course, the tourism industry in this province has been especially hard hit. We know that thousands of individuals, thousands of jobs are at stake. We certainly were relieved when the World Health Organization lifted what was, in my view and in the view of many experts, an unjustified travel ban relating to this great city of Toronto.

We are now in a position to begin what is going to be a difficult road back to prosperity in this great province. The Ernie Eves government has pledged to take every possible step in speeding Ontario's recovery. I say that we started immediately. Within one hour of receiving a recommendation from the chief medical officer of health, our Premier, Premier Eves, declared a provincial emergency, and that allowed for the enactment of powers to protect the health and safety of Ontarians in every part of this province. A provincial command centre was activated, and representatives of all ministries were made available to provide necessary information.

My own ministry took a number of steps in those early days and is continuing to be involved in this recovery. I should say to you that we offered assistance to municipalities in the very early days. We had SARS-related staff available, individuals who had the knowledge and information about SARS. They worked with our municipal partners to talk about pressures and challenges that our municipal partners were facing. They talked about how best practices could be shared between regions and they talked about how the municipalities and the province were going to deal with what were very significant costs.

**1710**

On April 28, I had an opportunity to meet with representatives of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and we discussed a number of different challenges they were facing. I should pause to say that I was very pleased on behalf of the government to receive appreciation from them. They were quite appreciative of the actions the Ernie Eves government had taken. We will continue to work with our municipal partners. I say to you that Minister Flaherty and Minister Coburn have been meeting with representatives of the city of Toronto, as have I, and we will continue to work with them in order to recover from what has been a great challenge to this great city.

I know many of my colleagues wish to speak to this as well, but in the time I have left, I wanted to touch on Bill 1. That is the bill that passed, I should say, with unanimous consent of this great assembly. It passed last Wednesday and, as a result, quite frankly, we as a province are in much better shape. The bill did a number of different things, but I will highlight three of them, if I may.



First of all, in relation to job protection, this bill has made it clear that anyone who is or has been affected by SARS-related personal illness, quarantine or isolation will not have their job jeopardized. We will be there as a government with the force of law to ensure that no one who had to absent themselves from their place of employment will suffer adverse financial consequences as a result of that.

Second, the bill that the Premier tabled and that was passed last Wednesday will strengthen the government's ability to curb the spread of SARS and other infectious diseases.

Thirdly, the bill gave Ontario an economic jumpstart of the sort we desperately needed. It established a sales tax holiday for our vital hotel and entertainment sector. I'm very proud of the fact that Premier Eves came forward early on with this package. It will not only help us recover from this great challenge that was posed by SARS; it will also help us in the future if and when we face similar challenges.

I will also say that we have attempted to involve our federal colleagues. Indeed, I wrote to Minister McCallum on April 11, 2003, at which time I did indicate to him that municipalities and the province were facing enormous financial pressures. By all indications, those pressures were going to continue to mount, which of course they have, and Minister Clement talked about just how significant those pressures have become. I am somewhat disappointed to say that I have not heard back from Minister McCallum today in any formal sense. I understand the federal minister has arranged for someone in his department to speak to a civil servant in my department some time later this week. I'm hopeful there will be some good news there, but I am somewhat disappointed that I haven't heard back directly from the minister to what was indeed a very direct request on behalf of the government.

I will say as well that I think the federal government should treat SARS as what it is, and that is a disaster, an emergency, and there must be a corresponding response from all levels of government. Certainly our hopes were raised earlier this month when we heard that the federal government would be coming forward with a SARS package of, I guess, not less than \$100 million. However, this announcement did not deal with the emergency costs of our health and municipal sectors. The people of Toronto quite frankly deserve better. They know the federal government should and can do more, and I'm hopeful they will in the very near future.

I will say, though, that with or without that assistance from our federal colleagues, the Ernie Eves government has done what it can to this point. We will continue to assist Ontarians throughout this emergency and we will spare nothing in order to get this province back to the position it was in before this terrible disease found its way into this province.

As I conclude, I want to say to you that the only way we're going to be able to expeditiously accomplish what I've just described is for all levels of government to work

together. I say to you that the federal and municipal governments will find full, willing partners in the Ernie Eves government. I look forward to hearing back from Minister McCallum and others in Ottawa as soon as possible.

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston):** I am happy to contribute to this debate. Let me start by thanking all the health care workers who were engaged in the battle against SARS, and in particular in my own riding the front-line workers at the West Park health care facility, whom I praise endlessly. I also send out our condolences to those families who lost loved ones and who may still have family members in the hospital.

Let me start by saying that there has never been a crisis more serious than the crisis we faced with SARS in this province, and for that reason alone, this government should concede to have a commission of inquiry around this matter. I don't think there has ever been a time in this modern period where we have faced this kind of crisis.

The fear that everyone felt was palpable. You could go anywhere in the city and people were frightened by what could have been a calamity worse than the one we had. This is not to be underestimated in terms of its gravity and the seriousness with which people came to view SARS. I think partly why we did so well against this disease is that people in the community took it quite seriously. If you were so unlucky as to have been quarantined, most people, in almost all cases, took that as a serious matter. So the Ontario public must be commended for their efforts in taking this matter very seriously.

But I say to the members opposite on the government benches, what this crisis pointed out was simply this: the health care system in our province was stretched to the max; there was no surge capacity. What it also resulted in was the fact that the health care system was virtually brought to a standstill. No one who was undergoing serious treatment for cancer care, for example, or for other types of illnesses, could continue to go to their health care facility to get that treatment. This crisis brought the health care system to a standstill, virtually crippling it. So for that reason I say as well that we should have a commission of inquiry. There is absolutely no question that we need one.

I say to the members opposite that this opposition day motion also gave the Minister of Health an opportunity to speak to this matter because he has yet to have spoken to the House regarding this matter and his handling of the crisis. I think it points out the need for a commission of inquiry because there are many unanswered questions on how we respond to this. Do we have, for example, first-response capability? Once the government got rid of its lab scientists, we virtually had no capability to determine that there was an infectious agent that was introduced to the province and how to cope with that. Yes, we had health care workers on the front line, public health officials who did a remarkable job given the circumstances, and they are to be commended. But it points to the need for a commission of inquiry to get at where we are weakest, the weakest links in the chain.

1720

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

*Applause.*

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Thank you, Mr Stockwell. It's good to be back. I missed this place. It's so good to have the opportunity to speak on issues, and it's so good to respond to Dr Clement—the Minister of Health; I don't mean to offend him. But he spoke so much about leadership, I couldn't believe it. I was watching him on television and he talked so much about, first of all, thanking the health care professionals, which of course I would do, I will do, others have done, he does, he did, and he speaks of them as the real heroes, and he's right. If there are heroes to be named, it isn't Minister Clement, it isn't Premier Ernie Eves, it isn't the rest of cabinet—Mr Stockwell, pardonnez-moi—and it isn't the rest of the caucus. If there are heroes—Minister Clement mentioned them—these are the health care professionals. And he's right.

Mercifully, we had somebody on the watch looking after us, because if we had to rely on Minister Clement or Premier Eves, the damage would have been worse.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** Oh, Rosie.

**Mr Marchese:** But it's true, Minister of the Environment. Dr Gold says to us, "News of the outbreak of unexplained pneumonia in Hong Kong was posted on the Web site of ProMED-mail ... and distributed via e-mail"—and it's got the address here—"on February 12 and 15." In British Columbia, they were dealing with this news and dealt with it effectively. In Ontario, they—the leaders and the leadership of Monsieur Eves—were asleep.

**Ms Martel:** No notification to hospitals at all.

**Mr Marchese:** No notification to hospitals of any kind. I don't know what he was doing. I don't know what the Minister of Health was doing, but to hear him so quietly talking about how concerned he has been, to praise the health care workers, God bless them, and that, yes, they put their health on the line and, yes, how the health care workers must have felt really bad—and of course they did, losing 23 people to SARS; of course they felt badly.

I wondered, where were our leaders? First of all, where was Mayor Mel Lastman? Because I thought about it. In March I was thinking, where is Mayor Mel? And then I thought, but where is Premier Eves? And then I added, but where is Monsieur Chrétien? Why aren't all these three leaders getting together to discuss what it is they should be doing, what plan they have to deal with this issue?

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Chrétien had nine holes of golf.

**Mr Marchese:** Chrétien didn't have a plan. I don't think he was playing golf with Ernie Eves; I think there were two separate trips. Ernie Eves didn't have a plan.

Mr Stockwell's going to speak next and he's going to tell me what he and others did in February, what he and

others did in March and what he and others did in April. The only time Ernie Eves came up with a plan was April 24. At the height, he wasn't there; toward its recession, they come with a plan. Isn't that great leadership, Minister of the Environment? Please, you've got to remind Mr Clement not to talk of those things. It's foolish when he does that.

I was looking for the leadership of Ernie Eves and it wasn't there, and I was looking for the other leaders because, like Giuliani, when there was a serious problem in New York, Mayor Giuliani was right there, and everybody else was there, like the governor, and everyone else concerned was there, taking this issue on. And health care workers were concerned, businesses were concerned, people in quarantine were concerned and not compensated, and they didn't respond. We held press conferences, of course, on our own, trying to urge them—not attacking the government so much as trying to encourage them to do something, and they weren't there.

So please, Minister of Health and others who want to speak, don't talk about leadership. It's shameful and it's embarrassing. Yes, praise the health care workers. But to talk about what you've done by way of prevention or by way of helping those affected, both businesses and those in the community and those who are quarantined—please don't talk about that. It's too embarrassing to talk about.

I just wanted this brief opportunity. I'm sure I'll have other opportunities in the future. I'm going to leave some time for my colleague.

**Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** As I rise to speak to this resolution today, I feel great concern and increasing hope in the face of this unprecedented challenge in Ontario. Our government's first concern, of course, is for those persons in Ontario most directly affected by SARS. Those who are grieving the loss of loved ones to this new disease remain in our thoughts and prayers. We encourage those who are close to these bereaved families to continue offering support and comfort in the days and weeks ahead. We also remain committed to providing every resource at our disposal to ensure that those patients who are still in hospital will be restored to full health as quickly as possible.

Our next concern is for those on the front lines in the battle against SARS: our public health officials and health care workers. I know we are all agreed that their response to this crisis has been nothing short of heroic. They have performed above and beyond the call of duty, and they deserve both our praise and our gratitude. We acknowledge and respect their professionalism, their dedication and their willingness to sacrifice for their patients and for their communities. They are a source of renewed confidence in the health care system of this province. They have done us proud.

Our government is also very concerned about limiting and reversing the damage done to our economy by this new disease, and this is a particular concern for me as the minister responsible for economic growth. The consequences have been felt not only in the city of Toronto,



but in the greater Toronto area and indeed in Ontario generally. The great city of Toronto is uppermost in our minds, of course. But the GTA and the adjacent area, all of Ontario, have been and will be affected by the economic fallout of SARS.

There's some good news today. Today the Minister of the Development and Technology from the smallest province in Canada, the province of Prince Edward Island, the Honourable Michael Currie, was here. He was here bringing 20,000 pounds of Prince Edward Island mussels to the restaurants of the city of Toronto. This is of course to get people out to the seafood restaurants. You've got to get out there. I had some of those mussels today—they're absolutely fabulous—straight from Prince Edward Island. They even promised to follow up with some potatoes, they said, from the island, and we're looking forward to that as well. It's Canada's smallest province, but clearly the people of Prince Edward Island have the biggest hearts today—they do—and we very much appreciate that thoughtfulness and generosity.

As we know, we had a difficult situation here, and that difficult situation was made worse when the WHO, an agency of the United Nations, advised against non-essential travel to Toronto. The speed and ease with which our health experts responded belied the WHO's claims about our city. In fact, one week later—without apology, though, and without remorse and without explanation—it rescinded its travel advisory. That was good news, to be sure, but Toronto's reputation was needlessly blackened by this unaccountable body. Local retailers, conference organizers and hotel operators will find no comfort in the WHO's hasty about-face.

So now we do have to help. From the beginning, we were confident that Toronto and Ontario were more than equal to the challenge. Because of vigilance and hard work, we have this disease under control. An end to the immediate crisis is certainly now in sight. Our government believes that we must invest considerable effort and resources if we are to completely overcome the effects of SARS on our people, our communities and our economy. For that reason, on April 29 Premier Eves announced new steps in our government's comprehensive strategy to overcome the disease and its effects. To protect those Ontarians most directly affected, we will immediately bring forward legislation to protect the jobs of quarantined workers and to give the government the power to provide compensation for wages lost due to quarantine. We will invest \$118 million in a two-year plan to restore global confidence in Toronto's and Ontario's reputation as a world-class tourist destination. An additional \$10 million is pledged to mount a complimentary campaign aimed at the international investment and business communities. To this end, we are bringing forward legislation to waive hotel and admissions taxes from now until the end of the crucial summer season.

1730

To further protect our people and our economy from any similar crisis in the future, our government is committed to immediate measures to strengthen our health

care system. We will immediately establish a registry of nurses and other health care workers to assist facilities under stress from SARS. We will immediately expand staffing in public health surveillance, epidemiology and related laboratories, and we will create six mobile rapid-response teams to help deal with any future outbreaks.

My ministry, the Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, will help ensure a coordinated response to infectious diseases through the Ontario Innovation Trust and the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund. We will also continue to co-operate with the academic and medical communities and the federal government.

Now, regarding the government in Ottawa, because of the seriousness of the present situation and to help prevent further crises, I believe it is important to state a few things for the record. The SARS crisis has dramatically illustrated once again that the federal government must not take Ontario for granted. The federal government has a role to play in preventing and overcoming such challenges. Ottawa has a duty to do its fair share. Complacency and dithering are inexcusable. Now, at last, the federal government has agreed to move beyond the most minimal and perfunctory screening at Pearson International Airport, a facility for which the federal government is, of course, responsible. We can only wish that they had done so when our government requested it urgently almost a month ago. The WHO travel advisory which so greatly increased Toronto's and Ontario's economic difficulties might have been avoided, but to prevent any recurrence of SARS and any lingering uncertainty about Pearson airport, it is important the federal government move quickly to implement the measures they have now promised.

Our government wishes to reassure the people of Ontario that the SARS crisis has had, and will continue to have, our full attention. We will continue to be vigilant in the battle against this new disease, and we will continue to commit whatever resources are necessary to win that battle decisively. For this reason, and because of the great example set by our citizens and by our health care professionals over the last few weeks, we are hopeful that SARS will be completely defeated and its aftermath overcome as quickly as possible.

We have had meetings here at Queen's Park with the leaders of the various tourist and hotel and restaurant associations. We had another meeting just over a week ago at Toronto city hall at the request of the Toronto Chinese Business Association. I was pleased to attend with the mayor and with Minister Collenette federally on behalf of the province. At that meeting, the province was asked by the municipality, the Toronto Chinese Business Association and the federal government to take on the coordinating role with respect to the economic revival plan. We are pleased to do that. The first meeting of the group with everyone together is on Thursday morning this week. Working together, we will ensure the economic revival of Toronto and Ontario.

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** Again I remind the public that what this debate is about is the

call for an inquiry to look into the SARS outbreak and to find ways to prevent a similar thing from happening again. I've noticed the government members have not talked about that. I would hope that that doesn't signal that they are going to vote against the motion.

I represent the area called Scarborough-Agincourt. Scarborough Grace Hospital is in the area I represent. Many of the people who were directly affected lived there and live there. Tragically, several of the people who unfortunately passed away lived in the area I represent. On behalf of the Legislature, I want to extend our sympathies to them.

I also want to, once again, thank the people at Scarborough Grace Hospital. It's a terrific hospital. Two of our granddaughters were born there. My mother-in-law, my wife—virtually all of our family has had outstanding service there. I compliment them once again.

I say to us that we have a responsibility—and I don't mean to exaggerate this—to the world to look at what happened, how we dealt with it, what lessons we learned, what things went right, what things went wrong and how a similar thing is prevented in the future. We have that responsibility. As I say, we all can cast our minds back to just a few weeks ago. The major world television networks were here in Toronto. We were, in many respects, the centre of attention. We can't simply ignore that.

So I say, what is the best possible way of gathering together what we learned about what went right, what went wrong and how we prevent a similar thing? We have the model, Walkerton, where, in hindsight, I don't think there's a member of this Legislature who doesn't now acknowledge that that inquiry has provided enormous benefit to the people of Ontario.

I say to all of us—and we're going to vote on this in 20 minutes—that surely we owe it to ourselves, to the people of Ontario and to the world that we pull together the learning in one place. What better way than the recommendation of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, a public inquiry. I say to us, let's do it.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** In the two minutes or so that is left to me, I want to say that I believe, with all my heart, that we need a public inquiry. But I want to say that we do not need the public inquiry to determine how our health care professionals acted. They acted with great passion. They acted in the public interest at all times. They went over and above the call of duty.

I especially want to give my congratulations to Dr Sheela Basrur and Dr Barbara Jaffe of the city of Toronto. It was my privilege and honour to work with those two women for many years as a councillor in the city of Toronto. In fact, going back to the time in East York, I had the singular opportunity—not once, not twice, but three times—to hire Dr Basrur, first as the associate medical officer of health, later as the medical officer of health for East York and finally in the city of Toronto, to choose her amongst all the others as the person to go on. I have to say that I have never been disappointed once in my decisions to hire her, and never

once has she disappointed the people for whom she worked. She is a dedicated professional and a person who puts more than 100% every day into her work.

I want to say as well that she has led an extraordinary team at the city of Toronto, everything from this SARS outbreak, but has also pioneered legislation around pesticides, pioneered legislation around tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases and smoking in public places. You will find Dr Basrur there giving only the best advice to the people of the city of Toronto and to the city of Toronto council.

But I am supporting a public inquiry because we need, as a community and as a government, to look at the mandatory programs. We need to look and see whether or not they were appropriately funded. We need to find out whether or not there were sufficient staff resources on the ground that allowed them, at the beginning, to go out and do what they needed to do.

We need to look, as well, at the mandatory programs and whether or not this government or any government, in giving 50-50 funding splits, is doing enough for times of crisis, whether they be SARS or West Nile virus; and whether, in fact, we need, as a provincial government, to make more funds available, not only to the city of Toronto but to all of our boards of health.

We need to find out whether or not the decisions were timely and that the information that was conveyed was done so in a timely matter. We need to know whether there were roadblocks along the way with the hospitals or the laws of quarantine.

We need to look at whether the federal government did or is doing anything at all that needs to be done, because surely they have a role to play here.

1740

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security):** I don't have a lot of time. I simply want to say that I don't disagree with the members opposite that there needs to be a review when indeed the provincial emergency is lifted. We should look at what happened, how the province of Ontario and the various agencies responsible for dealing with emergencies handled this crisis. But I think that at the same time if you look at the connotations related to the whole idea of a public inquiry and the positions put forward by primarily the official opposition, they're trying to cast a shadow over the response of the Ontario government. They're trying to cast a shadow—and all of the outstanding professionals in the province responded in such a magnificent way to this crisis.

The member opposite used the example of Walkerton. The reality is, the Ontario response was described by the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta—no one with any political bias here or an axe to grind. They described the Ontario response as a triumph. We should not forget that. That doesn't mean we haven't learned from this, that we can't improve with respect to how we respond to emergencies, but to try and score political points on this is truly, truly regrettable, and that's indeed what is happening.



We should take some time to reflect on the outstanding professionals in the public service of Ontario who worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the best interests of—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

Further debate?

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** I'm one of those who is not at all surprised that our civil servants have responded so well, and of course we commend them. Can you imagine if they were given all the tools? Maybe that's what we should be looking at.

Let me say that now that the crisis is under some control and we have looked at the economic situation and the impact it has caused, there's one other aspect that should be looked at: the social impact, the sort of turmoil it has put on some of my constituents in Scarborough-Rouge River, which has been impacted tremendously in this situation. Schools were closed at one time because of the fear—there's not only SARS, there's the fear of SARS itself. Apartment buildings in quarantine were being announced on CNN. It wasn't so. Something happened here. Maybe the government should be saying, "Did we handle this thing properly?"

What Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are calling for—and I know that the NDP is supporting this, and I heard the public safety minister saying he understands there should be some sort of inquiry into what went wrong. Maybe we should be asking whether Parliament should have returned at the time to deal with the issue, like when we had the garbage strike. Should the first minister of the day be around all the time? Would that be helpful? Did the hospitals have enough resources at the time to handle the situation? Was the information dispensed in a way that people could have been better informed? All of this kind of stuff would be very important and we could learn from it.

Let me tell you, Scarborough-Rouge River is pulling itself together. We're going to have a festival in my constituency, showing the confidence in the system, that we are people who can come together, not depending on whether Ernie Eves would come back to call the House to order.

We must have an investigation. That's what we're asking for. We want to establish an inquiry that we can all learn from; we can learn for the future. Because SARS will not be the only thing that will happen. I'm sure other diseases or other events will come. Are we ready to handle all of that? We're not quite sure. An inquiry is something we should go forward with.

Scarborough-Rouge River and all of us are ready to support that inquiry, and I hope you do so too.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** It is a pleasure to rise in this House on what I think is public business. It's about defining the public interest in terms of the SARS outbreak. It is the job of this House, and would that we were sitting sooner to do more of that work, frankly.

But it is not about trying to assign partisan blame to the government of the day. The question is not that. The question is, why does government member after government member want to hide away from that responsibility? We support them in this as the government, and we expect them, as the government, to do their very best, and then we expect them as the government to not be afraid of what might have gone wrong. That is somewhat of a concern today as we stand in this House—and we stood here before in similar conditions for two weeks until Mr Conway's intervention, until Mr McGuinty's intervention and until other people's interventions. There was a reluctance to have an inquiry on Walkerton. For two weeks the government said no to that. I think instead what we will hopefully see prevailing is the public interest.

Clearly we had a mysterious disease. Clearly it came into conflict with some of the prior decisions of this government. Were those important decisions, to have part-time public officers of health in some parts of the province, to stand down from some of our disease protection? The fact is, we don't know. The fact is, we cannot afford not to know.

The question, I think, for all reasonable Ontarians is, why would any government of any political stripe not want to know? We have only the reasonable apprehension that we will be able to experience this at some point in the future in some way. We want, on this side of this House—and I would like to believe this sentiment is shared—to experience these kinds of outbreaks, these potential crises, in the best way possible. What could be wrong with an open, public, accountable review? Too often in the last seven years in this province, accountability has been a one-way street. It can't be any longer.

This certainly is a bigger proposition than the parties in this House, than the future of this government; it has to do with whether or not some of the people in this province deserve to be heard. There were casualties. We owe them respect. There were collateral casualties. A woman of my acquaintance, her husband died at St Joseph's hospital. He died with a phone in his hand because she wasn't allowed to visit him, even though it was known that he was dying. There were newborns, for example, at St Joseph's hospital as well who couldn't be visited by parents for weeks on end because of the exigencies of this crisis. There were other people dying who were not comforted day after day after day. There were organ transplants that couldn't happen.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** What would you have done?

**Mr Kennedy:** The member asks, what would we have done? What we would have done in the shoes of the government is hold a public inquiry. We would not be reluctant to get to the bottom of what is the public interest in this, an important public issue.

**The Acting Speaker:** This completes the time allocated for debate. I will now place the question.

Mr McGuinty has moved opposition day number 1, "That the Legislative Assembly supports the establish-

ment of a commission of inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act to investigate the SARS outbreak and provide recommendations on how best to prevent and respond to such an outbreak in the future."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.*

**The Acting Speaker:** All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	McGuinty, Dalton
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Sorbara, Greg

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Arnott, Ted	Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Tasca, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Eves, Ernie	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Young, David

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 36; the nays are 51.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1802.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman  
 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr  
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers  
 Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller  
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman  
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	<b>Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony</b> (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	<b>Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen</b> (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	Lanark-Carleton	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Don Valley West / -Ouest	<b>Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Markham	<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.</b> (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Erie-Lincoln	<b>Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim</b> (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	<b>Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda</b> (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga East / -Est	<b>DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl</b> (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	<b>Baird, Hon / L'hon John R.</b> (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	<b>Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	<b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	<b>Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	<b>Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	<b>Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary</b> (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	<b>Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad</b> (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	<b>Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J.</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	<b>Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian</b> (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	<b>Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R.</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	<b>Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	<b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet</b> (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	<b>Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	<b>Young, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York North / -Nord	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Vacant
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 6 May 2003

Mardi 6 mai 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 mai 2003

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2003, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** Is there a quorum present?

**Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Deputy Clerk:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** A quorum now being present, the member for Beaches-East York.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** Yesterday evening I was partway through my speech, about six minutes, and I was talking about what I thought some of the highlights of the throne speech were and some of those things in the throne speech that were commendable.

I think the most commendable part of the entire throne speech was hit when the government was talking about the provisions around drunk driving. I must commend the members opposite, because I think that is one part of the throne speech that almost everyone can agree with. If you are caught drunk driving once, I guess anyone could put it down to a mistake, but if you are caught a second time, that surely should be the end. To give a third time, as the present legislation allows, is beyond what most people in society think goes to fairness. So to reduce it to twice is a move in the right direction. Of the entire throne speech, for me that was the thing you got best, and I congratulate you for that.

There were other things in the throne speech I'm going to just gloss over, which I think are deserving of comment. One of the problems is when we get into the Conservative request that there be an education rebate for seniors. No one would deny that our seniors have worked very hard in this province. They have defended us in times of war; they have put their children through school; they have built a society and communities across Ontario of which we are all very proud. There is no doubt that many of them are deserving of some kind of rebate because some seniors—not most, but some seniors—find

themselves in very poor pecuniary circumstances. What has been proposed, though, I would suggest has gone too far.

What has been proposed is that all seniors, regardless of their income, be the subject of having tax rebates around education. With the greatest of respect, that seems to me to have gone too far, for a government such as your own to look to the demographics and to see who is likely to support you and then to reward them. They will be getting an average, according to your own figures, of some \$427 a year, that \$427 to be taken off the taxes for their homes. We could agree, perhaps, if \$427 was the maximum or if \$427 was a reasonable figure, but what you have failed to do and what I think you need to do by the time this legislation comes forward is to cap it, because it seems that many, many people in this province will find it untoward and unacceptable that people like Frank Stronach, who is himself above 65 years of age and lives in a \$5-million house, will get some \$20,000 or so in tax rebates from this government. Surely that money is needed for education. Surely no one in this province would think that a kind of legislation that allows such blanket reductions, even for those people who do not require it, do not need it and, I would suggest, have not even asked for it, has gone far too far.

#### 1850

I look too at what is in the legislation, and we find some other anomalies, some things that I think are deserving of comment. I know, because the government members stood to their feet and gave the loudest ovation, not for the nurses and doctors and the people who have been out there to battle SARS, but for sending some of our police officers to Iraq. I don't know how many people have stopped to think about this or whether this is good government policy for a provincial government in Canada to make this one of the key hallmarks of a throne speech debate. It was only in subsequent days we found out that it was not entire detachments or the denuding of towns of their police services, but in fact it would only be four police officers that would go off to Iraq. I am not convinced that this is a provincial mandate and I am not convinced for a moment that those four officers would not be better served in the towns and cities and on the highways of Ontario. It is all very well for this government to announce that there are going to be some 1,000 new police officers. That's not bad; it brings it almost back to where they were in 1995. It's not bad, and I think people would respect that we need more police officers in our communities. We have people who are frightened to go on the streets. They need to be reassured. We have

people who break, with impunity sometimes, the laws on our highways. They need to be stopped. I would suggest that even four more police officers in Canada, in Ontario, in our towns and cities, is preferable to those police officers being sent to foreign jurisdictions, however much good they may or may not do.

What's not in the throne speech is the most troubling to me. What is not in the throne speech is any talk about the towns or cities or urban infrastructure of Ontario. There is nothing in here that will talk—

**Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** What about Smart Growth?

**Mr Prue:** Smart Growth. OK, I've been asked, "What about Smart Growth?" Yes, there's a little tiny bit in there about Smart Growth. So let's talk about Smart Growth. With all the greatest of respect to Mayor McCallion, who was my friend and colleague for many years as we sat on the mayors' conferences going around Toronto and in the GTA and where we agreed on a great many things, the Smart Growth proposals are made in a way that they are done by consensus. Consensus is not always a bad thing, but what the consensus has done in this particular case is watered down what is absolutely necessary. It has watered it down because the politicians and the developers of course cannot always agree, nor can ordinary people agree with what is going to happen to their communities.

In fact, what is happening to their communities is that cities have really been left out of this whole equation. There is absolutely nothing new in terms of transit. The government says they give a couple billion or \$3 billion in transit money as if this is new. Governments used to give much more than that on a yearly basis, not on a five-year basis, to mature systems like the Toronto Transit Commission. That is devoid here. This is no longer here. You have mature cities such as Hamilton, Toronto and Ottawa literally hemorrhaging from a lack of money in transit. You have cities where potholes are now more common in the streets. You have no funding mechanism that is set out here, whether it be a portion of the gas tax or a forgiveness of the provincial sales tax, that people are starting to talk about in the need to rejuvenate our cities.

There is nothing in here about the homeless. There is nothing in here about building new homes for people who are in financial difficulties, for people who cannot afford the rents in some of our larger cities. We know that rents in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa and London, Ontario have started to increase to proportions where people can no longer afford to live in the apartments they once occupied. We know that rents today have gone up to well in excess of \$1,000 for a two-bedroom apartment in Toronto and we have economic evictions taking place on almost a daily basis—never mind "almost" on a daily basis, but on a daily basis—by hundreds of people.

We have seen in this province the real need to build affordable housing. We saw in November 2001, all the housing ministers from across Canada and from the Canadian government meet in Quebec City and come

down with a plan to build affordable housing. Then we saw only the province of Quebec—and perhaps Nunavut, if you want to include them as well—that actually came up with the dollars for that province or territory to actually start the construction of affordable housing. It is very sad to say in this province of supposed opportunity that not one home has been built since November under this plan. We have a brand-new Municipal Affairs and Housing minister who has met with his federal counterpart and is now saying that some 2,000 affordable homes are going to be built on a pilot-project basis. How you can have a pilot project for building homes is beyond me. We have been building homes in this city, building homes in this province, for 300 years. We don't need a pilot project to build 2,000 more, and we have very little to learn in how to build them or where to situate them that we do not already know.

There is absolutely nothing in the throne speech that gives hope to anyone who is out there on the streets that they might improve or live in better living circumstances, or to the 90,000 families in Ontario who are on the waiting list for affordable housing or subsidized housing that they will ever, in their lifetime, get into one of those units. We as a province have failed, and this throne speech has failed abysmally to talk about that.

The other night following the throne speech, I had the privilege to attend with Alvin Curling at CITY-TV; it was a program called "Hour Town". We were on for a half-hour. We were talking about the throne speech, the good things about it—and we both mentioned the drunk-driving provisions—but also the bad things about it. There were six callers in that half-hour, and three of them spoke about how they felt betrayed as renters that there was nothing in there about the Tenant Protection Act, nothing that was going to stop them—nothing at all—from getting increases in rents over and above again and again. A woman in some distress phoned from Mississauga saying that it had become impossible for her and her family to afford the rents that were being charged.

I also looked to see what was in there about the environment. This government has had some difficulties in environment over the last number of years, starting of course with Walkerton, but continuing today in this Legislature, when there was talk about firing up diesels for electricity in some of our mature cities in places where great numbers of people live in close proximity to what are now going to be diesel-fired generators.

There is nothing or very little in there about improving the environment or the air quality—nothing much that was said. In fact, what I found most chilling of all was that there were a couple of lines put aside talking about generating electricity and energy from the combustion of garbage. We have gone a long way in this province away from using incinerators and using incinerators to get rid of garbage. This is a lightning rod to many people in the environmental movement. I will tell you, in my own riding of Beaches-East York and in the neighbourhood riding of Toronto-Danforth, there is a growing citizens' movement that is afraid of what is being proposed here



and of what the city of Toronto had in mind when they were trying to relocate these types of incinerators, or the new technology, as they called it, in the Ashbridges Bay area. That has been beaten back for the moment but this throne speech is talking about resurrecting it, and I think we all need to be very nervous about this.

We also need to be very nervous about what was in the throne speech in terms of union-bashing. I mean, this government has a horrible record when it comes to union-management relations. It has a very horrible record with the teachers, it has a horrible record with the farm workers and it has a horrible record, quite frankly, with almost the entire unionized force in this province. What we saw here was an attempt to categorize the unions as undemocratic and to try to say that some major changes were going to take place in what can only be described, I would put out to you, as a very democratic institution where people have the right, every year or so, to elect their leaders. People have the right to remove them. People have the right to attend meetings. I, for one, wonder why this bashing continues. I wonder why the government is pushing these kinds of hot buttons, except we know of course that an election is coming. I would suggest that on the basis of what is in this throne speech, an election should be called sooner rather than later. If these are the best ideas you have, I would suggest you bring them out to the public and let the public decide if this is the direction Ontario needs to go in.

1900

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing):** I'm pleased to stand in my place tonight and join in the debate with the member from Beaches-East York. I'm going to have the opportunity to speak to the throne speech a little bit later this evening and basically tell the people of Ontario, in particular the people of northern Ontario, what it means to them. There are some great initiatives in here for the people of northern Ontario. I'm eager to be able to stand in my place a little bit later and tell the people of northern Ontario what it means to them.

I listened very closely to the member speak. One of his points was 1,000 new police officers to help our communities be a safe place to live and work and raise a family. I can tell you in northern Ontario we live in one of the safest places in the province. Our crime rates are down thanks to the North Bay Police Service and the OPP that service our area. The fact that we're bolstering the law enforcement by 1,000 new police officers can only speak well to the future. Obviously, we are seeing crime rates go down, in particular, in the north. This is only going to further reduce crime. That's good news for families raising young children so that they have the confidence to go out in the evening to soccer games or hockey games. It's a safe place to live.

It's a privilege to stand here, as we all know as MPPs, and represent our areas. Of course, I represent Nipissing and Mr Prue represents his area. I understand he arrived at Queen's Park a few months before I did, so Mr Prue and I are kind of rookies here in the Legislature. I will be

able to get a little bit more time a little later this evening to go over again what the throne speech means to the people of northern Ontario.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** I'm pleased to stand and make comments about the speech from the member for Beaches-East York, and I thank him for his comments. Certainly, he showed some of the weaknesses of the speech from the throne. I'd like to highlight and reinforce some of the things he said.

Listen, the speech from the throne was lacking. It was lacking a vision; it was lacking clarity; it was lacking a direction—I think all of which the people of Ontario want.

The Sudbury Star today wrote an editorial. The Sudbury Star is normally a friendly paper to the Progressive Conservative government. The Sudbury Star today said that the throne speech lacked vision, that what it didn't do was set a direction for the people of Ontario, and because of that, this government should call the election. When you're getting editorials like this, they reflect the thinking across Ontario, the thinking in Beaches-East York, the thinking in North Bay certainly, and the thinking in Sudbury. I am concerned that the speech from the throne clearly didn't set an agenda for northern Ontario. We have suffered since 1995 in northern Ontario because this government didn't provide a vision for northern Ontario. This government clearly has destroyed the quality health care that we had in northern Ontario. The speech from the throne provided no optimism for the people in Sudbury who are waiting for this government to bring a cheque for \$160 million so that we can get our hospital back on track so that we can begin the construction. There is much weakness in this speech, and I agree very much with what the member from Beaches-East York said.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** I'm very pleased to rise this evening and commend my colleague from Beaches-East York. I think the members will agree, if they're being non-partisan, that you probably won't find a more thoughtful and thought-through analysis of anything that's in front of us than that which you'll get from the member from Beaches-East York. I appreciate that government members, in particular, may not agree with his conclusions. But I don't think that anyone would argue that he doesn't take the time to read the material, and not only do the research, but apply it to his own experience, which in the area of municipalities, in particular, is extremely vast. I think, again, that we've seen a reflection of the kind of solid work that he does on behalf of this caucus and his constituents.

I want to just underscore what I think is one of the most blatant partisan aspects to the throne speech, and that's the whole issue of the property tax credit for seniors. I don't think there's anything more transparent in terms of showing what this government does and how they go about it. They will talk endlessly about wanting to help seniors, about giving them money back, about the work that they've done to build our society—all the things that we believe in, which are true. But let's take it

the next step and look exactly at what it means. It means that, on average, the average senior will get \$427 a year. Well, for some seniors, 427 bucks is going to make a difference, and they'll appreciate it. But let's take a look at the whole program. A \$250,000 home gets \$670. That's not a lot of money for a home. But jump to \$2.5 million and you're getting 6,700 bucks. If you go to Frank Stronach, the best example at \$5 million, he's going to get 20 grand. So it's just one more way of giving somebody who doesn't need taxpayers' support and subsidy 20 grand of money that he didn't earn.

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** It's a pleasure to be able to rise for a few moments to discuss the throne speech.

I think that one of the important things that people recognize about the throne speech is the importance of the message with regard to the economy. Too often, people look at one particular program, one particular aspect, and don't see the fact that each is connected to the other. Everything rests on a strong economy. Everything rests on the ability for each person in this province who is able-bodied and able, then, to have a job. That is the first step. Those things, then, that add to our quality of life are the kinds of programs that are ensured in the throne speech that looks at providing monies and continued support for quality health care and education.

I think that people need to see the connection between those initiatives that are in the throne speech that speak to maintaining a strong economy, an opportunity for everyone to be able to have a job, and providing for the programs that we value and the programs that continue to support our quality of life. That's what this throne speech is all about.

It does include further tax cuts and it does include further commitment to priority areas of spending, whether we're talking about health care, education or adding the 1,000 new police officers to our province. It's all connected.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Mr Prue:** I thank the members from North Bay, Sudbury, Hamilton West and York North.

I guess, in the two minutes, I would just like to speak about the comments from the member from York North. In fact, yes, this is about the economy. Yes, it is about how money is being spent. But, with respect, the money that is needed to be spent in areas such as education and health care that you talk about is simply not there, and it is not contained within the throne speech. We know, yesterday, the bond rating service yesterday questioned whether or not this government has a balanced budget because no one has said where the \$2.2 billion in asset sales is going to come from, and whether there is any plan at all. We know that the government representatives have said you are not going to sell Hydro. We have no idea what other asset sales could possibly be sold off. Could it be Algonquin Park? I don't know. I don't know what you could sell for \$2.2 billion or what you intend to do to balance the economy. The problem with that is, where does the money come from for health care and all

of the problems that are related around home care and hospitals that have insufficient staff?

**1910**

Education is even worse. From your own throne speech, you talk about allowing people to choose schools for their children and travel at distances. That's not the answer. The answer isn't to send them to the best schools in a particular region or area. The option, and what you should be choosing, is to make all of the schools excellent, so that there's not a flight from poor areas to rich areas. That's what you should be doing. You should be including English as a second language; you should be including instructors; you should be including problems with the double cohort. It's simply not there and it needs to be.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr McDonald:** It's an honour as the MPP for Nipissing to stand in my place tonight and speak about the throne speech. What is a throne speech and what does it mean to ordinary Ontarians? I did a consultation in my riding one evening and we had a fairly good turnout of individuals. That question was raised: what is a throne speech and what does it mean? From what I've gathered from that and what I saw here in the Legislature, the throne speech is a direction or a vision of the province of Ontario. What does it mean to our young people, our seniors, our families? What benefits do they have? What does the government of Ontario actually do?

Of course, my focus has always been northern Ontario, because that's where I'm from. I'm very proud to be a northerner. I was very pleased that through our consultation we sent down our results to the Premier, and we were thrilled that a lot of it made it into the throne speech. I might add, as everyone is concerned at home, health care and education are very important, but so are jobs and retaining youth in the north. That is crucial to us to build our northern communities to provide opportunities for our young people to stay in northern Ontario.

I was very pleased to hear that tax incentive zones are being proposed throughout the province of Ontario, in particular in northern Ontario. As Toronto felt in the last month or so of reduced tourism, we feel that too. We feel there's a lack of business opportunities, although it does seem to be improving the last little while. We're just thrilled that the Premier has supported northern Ontario. He has shown that he has a vision for northern Ontario. He's shown that he supports seniors, our young people, and our young people with disabilities.

I mentioned the tax incentive zones. What that really means to the people who don't really understand—a lot of business people would understand in the sense that two or three days out of their week they deal with government forms, agencies and taxes. A tax incentive zone will level the playing field for northern Ontario so that businesses and industries elsewhere in the world will see northern Ontario as a viable alternative to locate. Obviously, we have the workforce there, we have the resources, we have very inexpensive land in the north. We have leadership, we have dedicated people and we



have bilingual individuals willing to work. We have a lot to offer in northern Ontario to the world. I think this idea of a tax incentive zone—I fought particularly hard for Nipissing and northern Ontario as well, because I think all of northern Ontario should share in the great news of a tax incentive zone. We'll see what happens on this issue in the weeks or months to come.

I remember during my campaign, just over a year ago, I was on a radio show and I got a call from an individual who happened to be in a wheelchair. He asked a question which was very important to him. His income had been fixed for quite a while and he wanted to know if there was anything we could do to help him out. I was very pleased to hear that there will be an increase to the Ontario disability support program for individuals with disabilities, so that they might be able to lead a little bit better lives. I was very pleased to see that in the throne speech. I think that spoke to what Premier Eves has said all along. He envisions a province that he'll consult with, listen to and get ideas and feedback from. I think what you saw here is a government that realizes that we need to be inclusive. I think that's what this throne speech was all about. It was very inclusive. It invited for the first time ever, I believe, the opinions and thoughts and concerns of ordinary Ontarians, not just MPPs, but everyone in the province. If you saw the throne speech, it really was a list of the concerns and issues for the people of Ontario.

I heard the member for Sudbury speak about there being nothing in the throne speech for northern Ontario. The Premier has already said he's going to do Highway 69, which I think is a benefit to Sudbury. We're seeing aggressive four-laning of Highway 11, which I'm continually trying to push. Hopefully we can get it four-laned in the next four or five years. But there are so many things.

I heard one of the members speak about tax cuts for seniors. I would call it tax relief more than tax cuts. It's a tax credit for seniors who live in their houses. When I was on the council in the city of North Bay, I heard from many senior citizens. Obviously municipal taxes go up two or three points every year. I heard from a lot of senior citizens who stated that they were fearful they couldn't stay in their own homes because costs were going up.

I have to applaud Premier Eves for saying to the seniors, "You built our communities. You built our province, and here is an opportunity for you to stay in your home with this property tax credit." I can tell you that this was an initiative that, as a member of the council, was a great idea that I fully support. I understand the official opposition is voting against the tax relief for seniors. That's their prerogative, I guess. I support this initiative for seniors. I don't want to name names, but I did hear from quite a few seniors as a councillor, and they wanted some tax relief. I applaud that.

I want to talk about the northern Ontario medical school. This is the first government in 30 years to open a medical school, and we're opening it in the north. I think

that's great news for northern Ontario, because the stats show that if we can train our doctors and nurses in the north, they will have the opportunity to stay there, and want to stay there. The way of life in the north is great. We have fresh air, fresh lakes, rivers and lots of green spaces that we have to enjoy.

Looking further at the northern medical school, I was also very pleased to learn—and I thought this was just a great idea—that there will be free tuition for doctors and nurses beginning practices in northern and rural areas. That shows leadership. Sometimes you people here in Toronto don't realize what it's like for the rest of us in the province. The fact that we have this opportunity to attract and retain doctors and nurses is a good thing.

We're building a new \$212-million regional health facility in the city of North Bay. There's a new hospital going into Mattawa. I can talk about the communities that I serve having really benefited, and I support them. I'm not trying to take credit for it because I don't deserve to take credit. But the fact that they are there shows the commitment of this government in the health care field in the north. These new hospitals obviously will be a little more efficient. They could also attract specialists and young doctors to the north because now they have the facilities and the equipment that other areas have enjoyed.

#### 1920

I had the opportunity a couple of months ago to participate in the first robotic surgery in the world. There was Dr McKinley and Dr Anvari. Dr Anvari was in Hamilton and Dr McKinley was in North Bay and they did this robotic surgery through the telephone lines and the computer systems. It was the first time in the world that it's ever been done. We were just thrilled at the fact that here is this technology that's available for doctors and nurses in the north. And it's also an opportunity to train doctors in the north, because when you think about it, if a doctor wants to learn a particular surgery, he might have to travel to Toronto and train, and obviously we're taking him out of the system and all the expenses. But now we have the opportunity through robotic surgery and telemedicine that these doctors can be trained in procedures within their own communities through this system. I think that speaks very well to innovation in the health field, innovation in the north. The fact that a northern doctor participated shows that the expertise is there. So all we have to be able to do is provide the tools for these individuals so they can teach. I think the thought is to learn, teach, and the next person does the same thing, so you can imagine as it gets going.

The other part of the health care field that's pretty exciting for us in the north is not all these new hospitals and the fact there is free tuition for doctors and nurses but the new Electronic Child Health Network North. When you think about it, you're going to ask, "What exactly is that?" That provides an opportunity for families that have young kids who might need a specialist down here at Sick Kids but who live in North Bay or Timmins or Sault Ste Marie—if their local physician takes an X-ray, this

X-ray automatically is in at Sick Kids. So the specialist at Sick Kids can look at the X-ray at the same time the physician in, let's say, North Bay is looking at it, without the trauma, the travelling and taking off work to come to a conclusion on what is best for the treatment of that child.

You can imagine: here is a family with a young child who needs some care. They don't have to take a four-hour trip down to Toronto, rent a hotel room, pay for meals and take off time from work—and the fact that there's a lot of anxiety there. The specialist can look at the X-ray at the same time and give his recommendations to the local physician.

I think that's great news. I can't wait until that's announced in northern Ontario. I think it will be very exciting for everyone who lives in northern Ontario to do this.

I just want to talk about education for a few minutes. We're very fortunate in the riding of Nipissing to have two great post-secondary institutions, one being Nipissing University. By the way, the president, Dr David Marshall, was just nominated as citizen of the year for North Bay in 2002, and we're having a dinner for him on May 15. The counterpart, obviously, is Canadore College, which is well known in the north. These are two institutions that have done so much for our students in the north. When we think of jobs and economic development, we don't often think of colleges and universities as that tool. I can tell you that the employment rates at Nipissing and Canadore keep going up and up. As we attract more students to the north—and Nipissing University had an over 200% increase in enrolment applications—each student to our community, let's say North Bay or Mattawa or Callander, represents \$14,000 to \$15,000 a year per student. You can imagine that if we have 800, 900, 1,000 or 2,000 students, each student represents an economic return to our community of \$14,000 to \$15,000.

Each professor, secretary, assistant, scientist—they all add to our economic development. Do you know what? It's a clean industry; there is no pollution. When we see an increase, it speaks very well to the leadership at Nipissing University; it speaks very well to the leadership at Canadore College. It also speaks very well of our communities in the north, that people will come to them. I run into individuals all the time who have been educated at Nipissing University and are thrilled that they have been able to find a job in the north, but not enough of them have the ability to stay.

I believe this is what this throne speech was talking about, how we keep our youth and provide opportunities for them to stay in the north, because we've seen a population decrease in the north over the last couple of years. Mind you, some of it's just because families are having fewer children, so the numbers will go down automatically. But the real concern and the real issue are opportunities for our young people to stay. That's crucial to building our northern economies, our northern communities. Everybody wants to be near their family, near

their grandparents. As these young people move away from northern Ontario, of course there is quite a distance. What we need to do is provide opportunities so that they might be able to stay there.

Speaking about education and health care, I was very pleased to see the Premier and the government are going to invest \$1 billion in the new Cancer Research Institute of Ontario. I did a quick little survey of all the members here, and I believe the stat was one in three or one in four individuals or their extended families have been touched by cancer. We found only one member on this side whose family wasn't touched by cancer, which speaks to the fact that probably most of us are, through this deadly disease. If you want to speak about a vision, if you want to speak about a direction for the people of Ontario, what better idea than to invest \$1 billion to maybe find a cure for this deadly disease? That is a vision that is speaking to families with grandparents, parents with young children, that will directly affect them and make their lives better.

That, to me, is leadership direction and shows that this government has a heart for families, for people who are probably going through tough times. With everything that's going on in the world today, when we're pulled in 1,000 different directions, isn't it nice to know that the government of Ontario is looking after the people of Ontario? It is providing things that normally when we pick up the newspaper, we wouldn't even read about, but it shows that good things are happening in Ontario and great things are happening in northern Ontario. Premier Eves is from the north and actually represented the riding just south of my riding. He knows what the issues of northern Ontario are all about. I've seen the vision. We've all seen the throne speech and it speaks very well to northern Ontario.

As elected officials here at Queen's Park, elected officials at council or even at the federal level, it's our responsibility to make decisions on behalf of society and what direction society's going in. The throne speech speaks to direction. It speaks to leadership and vision of a province, of communities. When we think of our province, it's kind of like thinking of the universe. If we think of our small communities and how it relates to them, I think it speaks very well to what Premier Eves is trying to do, what this government's trying to do.

As elected officials, we're all honoured to represent our ridings, our regions, our communities. When I talk to members on this side of the House, I can tell you that they're very committed to what they're doing, very committed to their communities, to the families they represent. As the individuals on the other side of the House know, it can be a very thankless job at times. You seem to be the face of every problem that comes forward and it tends to be your fault. But I can also tell you that there are individuals out there who appreciate the effort elected officials make on behalf of their constituents.

**1930**

When I make presentations to our local councils, whether it be Bonfield, Mattawa, Callander, Trout Creek



or Powassan, I always start my presentation off by thanking them for giving up their valuable time, their family time, their free time to represent their communities, to make their communities a little bit better than they were. We, as elected officials here at Queen's Park, are basically trying to do the same thing: we're trying to make our communities, our province, a little bit better than they were last year. Really, that's what we speak to. We speak to the fact that we spend a lot of evenings in this place. We're here till 9:30 tonight. A lot of us started at 8 o'clock this morning. So we put in long hours.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** Eight o'clock?

**Mr McDonald:** Some start maybe a little earlier. We're here because we believe in what we're trying to do. We believe we can make a difference. We believe we can make decisions so that our kids or our grandkids will have a better, safer place to live.

Speaking of the province of Ontario, it's leading the country in economic development; it's leading the country in jobs. It is a very great place to live. If you travelled around the world, I think you'd come back and say, "You know, the province of Ontario is one of the best places to live."

I know I've run out of time. I'd love the opportunity to have more time later.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I would like to open my remarks with the statement that I agree with something the member from Nipissing said: that we all come to this room, to this Legislature, very proud of the people and the communities we represent. I certainly am very proud of every community in the riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Which communities?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Well, there are some wonderful communities. Listen, to begin to name them would mean that I would leave out a few. But I would suggest that's perhaps where my agreement with Mr McDonald ends.

He would suggest that we all work very hard here, and I don't dispute that. But I would only remind the members of the government that we on this side of the House would like to work a lot harder. We think it is offensive that your Premier decided to take a 138-day break. From the time the House last sat in December, it took him 138 days to decide to return to this Legislature to do the business of the people of Ontario.

With respect to the statements the member made about what the throne speech would have in store for seniors of the province with regard to their education taxes, I would only remind them that this government has not even followed through on the education tax breaks they promised two years ago. So I say to the seniors in Ontario, be very wary, because if they are no better at following through on the education tax cuts for you than they have been for everyone else in Ontario, you could be waiting a very long time. I would also remind the seniors of Ontario to remember that this is the government which

has raised the copayments for seniors in long-term-care facilities by 15%.

**Mr Christopherson:** I want to compliment the member from Nipissing for creating such an interesting story for us. It's a little early for bedtime, but I think it would be quite appropriate, given that it had a nice little flow to it, especially the part where most of it was made up, in my humble opinion, especially the references in the throne speech to the budget and how well they've managed the economy and—get ready for the applause—the fifth balanced budget. Right?

**Hon Mrs Johns:** Whoo-hoo.

**Mr Christopherson:** There we go, see? Give them their prompt and they're right on cue.

Just to put it on the record, the finance minister said, "We have a balanced budget. We've done it five years in a row. We're going to continue to do it." It really would be something if it were accurate. But it's not just me, it's not just the NDP caucus, and it's not even just the Liberal caucus. Who indeed is saying that they don't have a balanced budget? It's the Dominion Bond Rating Service. We know, at the end of the day, that if ever there's a non-partisan measurement of what's going on in your economy, it's going to be these bond rating agencies, because they don't really give a tinker's dam who the government is. What they care about is what the level of confidence is in the return for investments made in a local economy.

This government of course wants to go on and on about all their balanced budgets. But what does the Dominion Bond Rating Service say? Quote: "Once again, unspecified asset sales were used to balance the budget ... turning the balanced budget forecast into a deficit of \$1.9 billion. ..." Remember the last election? You sold the 407 and used all that money in one year to pay for your election promises, and we've lost the value of that. Same thing: you want to sell off \$2 billion to create a phony impression of a balanced budget.

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** It's great to have a lecture from my dear friend David Christopherson from Hamilton, because I remember, David, when you were in the cabinet of former Premier Bob Rae and you thought it would be a very good thing to sell the rolling stock of GO Transit. Not only that; you went to Bermuda, as I recall.

**Mr Christopherson:** Me personally?

**Mrs Marland:** Not you personally, but your government. I can't recall which minister went, but they went for a very long weekend—a big deal because they sold all the rolling stock of GO Transit. And guess what? All that money came into the treasury, and after the money came into the treasury, you then had to turn around and lease back the rolling stock.

**Mr Christopherson:** We lost that election, didn't we, Margaret? That was quite a few years ago.

**Mrs Marland:** Yes, actually you did lose it in 1995 because everybody recognized that that kind of manoeuvring with budgets simply doesn't work.

I would say to my revered colleagues on the other side of the floor this evening that if you can ever in your

wildest imagination, first of all, tell us—and I know what's happened over the last 18 years, and certainly Minister Runciman knows what's happened over the last—

**Mr Christopherson:** Four thousand.

**Mrs Marland:** —22 years—just tell me when you ever balanced a budget. We've balanced it five times—a record in 100 years.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this debate. I'd like to thank the member for his discussion and remind him, as did my colleague here on this side of the House, of what this government has done to some of our senior citizens.

One of the things in my riding that is absolutely pervading right across the spectrum of not just senior citizens is the disgust that all our senior citizens felt, that all our citizens felt, that this government would slap our senior citizens, who are most vulnerable and frail, with a 15% increase on their long-term care as a copayment. That to me represents no respect to our senior citizens whatsoever.

I would also suggest to you that there are an awful lot of senior citizens who have begun to call me to simply say, "You know what? We got those tax dollars for our children to attend school. When they want to take the education tax portion off the property tax—our kids got that money from the senior citizens before them." They are now saying, "You know what? I'm a grandparent now and I don't have a problem paying some of my fair share of tax for the education portion of the property tax." They realize that education is an important issue in our province, one that was dismantled by this government and needs to have that money put back in again, and now you're telling them they don't need to pay. Well, they feel compelled to pay their fair share of those taxes.

You did let them down in a promise you made that you didn't keep when you were going to take a look at removing the taxes on their incomes and make sure they have that stability there. If you don't do that, you're not doing it to all senior citizens. As a matter of fact, I want to remind this place that you're doing it to the senior citizens, not along with them.

Ask CARP what they said about this idea that you floated in this trial balloon. They've told you clearly that they want to pay their fair share of this tax, because it's education and it's needed for all of us. So shame on you for trying to do that.

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**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Mr McDonald:** I would like to thank the members from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Hamilton West, the hard-working member from Mississauga South, and the member from Brant. But let's be very clear regarding the senior citizens. Let's just tell the truth.

The fact is, this government in its throne speech is providing a tax credit for senior citizens who, over the years, have faced increased property taxes so that they may be able to stay in their homes. The fact that you

voted against the property tax credit for senior citizens—that was your decision. We wanted you to support it; you voted against it.

So be very clear to the seniors out there. Stand up and say, "We don't believe that we should give senior citizens a tax credit on their property." They built our communities and they want to stay in their homes, and you're voting against it. Just stick to the facts. The fact is, you voted against this tax credit for the senior citizens.

So this government is showing its support for senior citizens. This government has shown that it has support for northern Ontario, and when they roll out these tax incentive zones, it will allow us to retain our youth in the north, so that they may be able to raise families and build communities.

In conclusion, I've enjoyed my 20 or 25 minutes that I've been able to speak to the throne speech, and I can tell you that I'm proud to be on this side of the House. I'm proud of Premier Ernie Eves and his vision and the direction of the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** I'll be sharing my time with the member from Brant and the member from Elgin-Middlesex. I want to jump right in quickly, because I do not have too much time.

The throne speech talked about cardiac surgery. It failed to mention, though, the impact of pediatric cardiac surgery. At the Children's Hospital of Western Ontario in London, the pediatric cardiac surgery unit was shut down and moved to Toronto. A last-minute reprieve at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa saved it from the same fate, pending a review by Senator Wilbert Keon by April 2003. The deadline was then moved to December 31. Then came SARS.

I thought that it was fitting that the Lieutenant Governor began his speech by talking about the health care crisis posed by SARS. This government has pursued a strategy of centralizing hospital care for many years. If there is any lesson to be learned from the SARS experience, surely it is that centralizing specific medical services in one very large hospital is extremely dangerous in the era of the highly contagious virus that spreads so quickly.

The Minister of Health has acknowledged that cardiac services might have been shut down in the province if the move from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa had already been made and if Toronto Sick Kids had been closed. During the SARS outbreak, some children scheduled for surgery at Sick Kids in Toronto were sent to CHEO in Ottawa. Had CHEO's cardiac surgery unit been closed by the government, where would those children have gone for their cardiac surgery? More importantly, would they have survived?

Having come through the health care crisis of SARS, we have now come face to face with the danger that concentrating all resources in one hospital can lead to disastrous results. So it's imperative to announce right now that this unit will maintain the CHEO pediatric cardiac surgery unit on a permanent basis, and have it stay in Ottawa. End of story.



We've talked about seniors tonight. Some members have mentioned them already. I was pleased to hear the Lieutenant Governor say, "Your government believes that each Ontarian—from the youngest to the oldest—deserves the best, most up-to-date care.... By making record investments in long-term care, increasing home care services ... your government has made it possible for hospitals to direct resources where they are most urgently needed."

However, the reality is somewhat different when it comes to seniors and an essential component of home care services.

A month ago I visited the Unitarian House, a non-profit, non-denominational seniors' residence in my riding. It encourages independent living by offering access to laundry rooms, dining rooms, home care services, as well as an assisted living unit. As a CMHC project, Unitarian House has a rent-geared-to-income program which provides subsidies for about 25% of its residents. The rest pay rents which, according to CMHC, are in the modest range.

When I visited the Unitarian House, Tom Dent, the president of the board of directors, said: "Our need is a home support program that provides homemaking—vacuuming, washing ... floors, doing laundry as well as help with a bath. These services were removed when the program was changed about two years ago. The change has resulted in residents having to go to long-term care (which costs the health care system) because they could not manage to live here without homemaking services (which also cost the health care system—but much less)."

Studies have shown that with effective support, it's possible and cost-effective for a group of seniors to live more independently and to their maximum potential.

Another constituent, Gile LaBine, reiterated the same concern. She wrote to the Premier two weeks ago:

"Home care services in our area have been reduced to personal care, which deals only with direct patient care such as perhaps a bath, changing of bandages, etc. The CCAC no longer provides homemaker services such as washing of clothes, cleaning or meal preparation. Are not such home care services essential, since proper nutrition and hygiene are needed if further complications in an illness are to be avoided?

"Are homemaker services in such circumstances not a priority in preventive care?

"Will the Ontario medicare system restore to the frail elderly, the chronically ill and/or the permanently handicapped the services that provide in the home the proper hygiene and adequate nutrition which are assured under hospital care?

"How will persons who are financially unable to procure such services be provided for?

"We are aware that some persons in Ontario are no doubt financially able, in the event of long-term illness, to provide for themselves both personal care and home maintenance services. But we know of doctors and nurses who are deeply distressed because of insufficient home

care available for patients who are chronically ill or who are handicapped."

The ministry's own Web site says, "Coordinate services for seniors, people with disabilities, people who need health care services in the community to help them live independently in their own home for as long as possible. Staff at the centres provide information and coordinate professional and personal support and homemaking services for people in their own home, and for school children with special needs, and make arrangements for admissions into long-term-care facilities."

But where are the homemaking services? The Council on Aging in Ottawa strongly believes that "care in the home must be recognized as an essential component of the health care system and be provided with adequate resources to meet the rapidly escalating demand for services."

A recent study in British Columbia which followed clients who had house-cleaning services cut concluded, "These simple, cheap services appear to help maintain the elderly person's function and prevent his or her deterioration," the author, Dr Marcus Hollander, stated. "We found that a significant proportion of people seemed to have a health crisis a year or two after their services were cut that ultimately cost the system more. ... By the end of the third year, the difference in total average cost to the health care system was about \$4,000 per person (per year), so clearly, this supposed 'cost-saving' measure was not cost-saving at all."

When we look at that, what is it that should be done? I suggest that the government might want to look the plan that the Liberal Party has put forward. We will invest in home care so that Ontarians can receive better care at home. The Harris-Eves government cut funding and lowered standards. Now, over 115,000 Ontarians are forced to either go without care or receive it in an institution.

#### 1950

Romanow identified home care as an essential component of modern medicare. Our long-term vision is to make home care a medically necessary service. Our first step is to get our vulnerable and elderly the services they need.

We will remove the arbitrary Harris-Eves limits on home care. If you require care and want it in your home, and that care costs less than sending you to a hospital or nursing home, we will make sure you get it.

The Harris-Eves record on seniors: reduced home care services, forcing the frail and elderly out of their homes and into institutional care; hiked nursing home fees by 15%; removed standards that made sure all nursing home residents received at least 2.25 hours of nursing care daily and three baths per week; allowed nursing homes to operate without licences or regular inspections, as reported by the Provincial Auditor.

We will: cancel the Harris-Eves 15% increase in nursing home fees; set high standards for our nursing homes and regularly inspect them to make sure those standards are being met; strengthen home care so seniors

can stay in their homes as long as possible; support seniors' centres that provide social, recreational, educational and volunteer opportunities that are stimulating to keep the brain active and occupied; improve the Ontario drug benefit program to ensure seniors get the medications they need; improve the Ontario drug benefit program to ensure seniors get the medication they need; help seniors better manage their prescription needs through better family home care, and I could go on and on.

The bottom line is that the Harris-Eves government cut home care and raised nursing home fees. Now they are trying to appease seniors by offering to exempt them from paying educational tax when many of them feel it's an honour to do so.

Access to MRIs: in the speech the government is guaranteeing waiting times for procedures including MRIs. I'd like to quote from Linda Hume-Sastre, who is suffering from multiple illnesses, who copied me in her letter to the Premier about her difficulty in accessing MRIs, "The waiting period for an MRI in Ottawa is now nine to 12 months.

"Frankly, I've given up any hope at all of having regular, timely MRIs. ...

"I find it absolutely unacceptable that I pay taxes in Canada" and Ontario "and cannot obtain the tests that are needed to follow the conditions that I have. I feel totally abandoned by the medical system in Ottawa and in Ontario." She goes on and on.

The throne speech talks a good line, tries to identify a lot of things that this government has contributed to creating in terms of many problems, but doesn't really provide many of the solutions when you go out there and you talk to people. I will stop there.

**Mr Levac:** I want to thank my colleague for outlining some very important issues that have been talked about quite a bit tonight, and that's the senior citizens. I want to thank him and I know his passion is there. I know that he's outlined our program very well so I'm not going to duplicate it other than to point out a few individual stories. It's a pleasure and an honour to get as little time as I have to talk on this throne speech.

With me I have a copy of the throne speech, the one that was presented to us in the House, and I want to make some references to it. I've also got some other documents in my possession that will make it quite clear that there is a contrast between what is being proposed in this throne speech and what my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and the Liberal caucus are going to be talking about.

I want to talk, right off the bat, about some of the things that I have heard in this place about this throne speech. One of the things that I will quote from in terms of the throne speech is this wonderful statement that they made on page 4, that they will be "refusing to borrow from future generations to pay for today's success." Well, you know what they've done? They've borrowed \$10 billion to give their first round of tax cuts. They've added over \$22 billion to the debt, which they never seem to remind you of. They take an awful lot of glory and praise for five consecutive balanced budgets, but

they borrowed to do it. That means that there is a tremendous amount of money, and I think it is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, that are being spent to pay the cost of that debt.

To tell me that that that's fiscal responsibility is nonsense. They're taking a great, large lump of big pride to simply sit back and say, "You know what we're doing? We're going to give you another balanced budget." But all independent auditors are telling it quite clearly and they're being honest about it. What they're saying is, "Where's the \$2-billion shortfall coming from and what assets are you going to sell?" It didn't get said in the throne speech. It didn't get said anywhere else.

One of the other things that they like to tell us about is those wonderful tax cuts that they always proclaim are the be-all and end-all of the universe of Ontario. They said that they've made 225 tax cuts since 1995. What they failed to tell to you is that they've downloaded on to municipalities and other areas that provide those services. They've attached 553 user fees to those 225 tax cuts. Tell me, does that pocket feel nice and thick with all that money from those tax cuts they're talking about? Heck, no; it's gone in to pay for the 553 user fees that have been applied since they came into office. So I wouldn't be taking fiscal gratitude from this government at all. They've added \$21 billion to the debt and they've added 553 user fees.

On public safety and security, I want to say that the other documents that I have in my hand are the really good ones. We've got Excellence for All in our education, a platform that's being endorsed by educators and parents across the province, and Growing Strong Communities. One year ago we announced that we wanted to make sure that there are 1,000 new police officers, but added to that we're going to have 100 new probation and parole officers to make our communities safe and secure.

An Ontario economic growth pattern—we're also dealing with the health care needs. We've got another platform that's out there: government and democratic reform. That's long overdue and has been praised by everybody. Anybody who knows anything about democracy is saying that this platform is a marvellous one in terms of democratic reform. The other issue that we've got in is another platform on our agricultural community that my colleague Steve Peters has been working on immensely to build up. I know my other colleague John Cleary, who's been in this place for a long time, who knows the agricultural community, deserves, my friends, an awful lot of credit for his understanding of rural Ontario. When he talks, you better listen because he knows what he's talking about. He endorses our plan.

I want to tell you very clearly that there was very little mention of the problems that have arisen in my riding. There's no mention whatsoever from our health department on the transportation costs of our dialysis patients. Not a penny is coming from them. There is no help for our brownfield redevelopment on the financial side. The regulations that they just snuck out are not acceptable to our municipalities. We knew that would happen and I



said that in committee. The government has failed to remove that ill-advised 15% increase of copayments on our senior citizens in long-term care. That's an insult to those people who built this province. Don't take credit for being proud of your senior citizens when you charge them that much money. The doctor shortage, the MRC problem—the Medical Review Committee have got my community up in arms.

Laurier Brantford is the only university in this province that has not received one dime of capital funding from this government. We need that money to help us grow a university in our riding.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** Ladies and gentlemen across Ontario, it's time for a change. I truly wish that this government would call the election. You know, there's a real myth out there that this government is so in control when it comes to fiscal management.

Let's look at the record. In 1990, when the Liberals left office, the debt of this province stood at \$39 billion. In 1995, when this government took over, the debt stood at \$90.7 billion. You know what the debt is today? It's \$111 billion. This government has added over \$21 billion to the debt. They're mortgaging your children's future and your grandchildren's future. These debts don't even include the debts that aren't shown in the provincial accounting, the debts that hospitals have had to assume because of chronic underfunding by this government. Let's look at some other wasteful spending by this government.

You've seen all this propaganda coming in the mail lately. You've seen the phony budget brochure. You've seen the West Nile brochure. Do you know how much they spent on that? Two hundred and fifty million a year. Your tax dollars, ladies and gentlemen across Ontario, are being wasted by this government—\$250 million a year, \$111 billion in debt, \$21 billion in new debt courtesy of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves.

Let's talk about consultants: \$662 million spent by this government, wasted on consultants, pointed out by the Provincial Auditor. So between \$662 million and \$250 million, we've got our own boondoggle in Ontario. We've got our own billion-dollar boondoggle, and the Harris-Eves government is responsible for that, for wasting your hard-earned dollars, ladies and gentlemen. These aren't fiscal managers; these are people who are prepared to mortgage the future, your future, for their own interests. I think that's totally irresponsible for a government to do.

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They say in this throne speech that they're going to help reform support for children with special needs. Let's talk about a young lady in London named Marlo Leatham. The Minister of Health promised almost a year ago that he was going to help Marlo Leatham out. "Oh, don't worry. It's just bureaucratic bungling and things are going to get solved." I had the opportunity this past weekend to attend a fundraiser on behalf of this young lady, and they're still waiting. This government has let down Marlo Leatham. The sad thing, when I was at the

fundraiser for Marlo, is that there are so many other Marlo Leathams out there. This government has turned its back on those individuals.

It's interesting, too, that all of a sudden they've discovered rural Ontario. They're going to develop a rural platform. Finally, after eight years this government has discovered that there is more to this province than the city of Toronto, that there is rural Ontario and there are distinct differences that exist between urban and rural. Finally, after eight years, this government realizes that it's turned its back on rural Ontario and that it needs to do something to help rural Ontario out.

They talk about mental health. We're still waiting in southwestern Ontario. In 1998, the Health Services Restructuring Commission issued its final report for the London and St Thomas psychiatric hospitals. We are still waiting. There are individuals in crisis out there. This government has not made a commitment to mental health in any way, shape or form.

They talk about transparency in unions, democracy and accountability. How about some democracy in the province of Ontario? We sat just a little over 70 days last year. We haven't sat in this Legislature for over 130 days. This government is afraid to face the opposition in question period. You're wasting taxpayers' dollars by operating this facility and not having us here doing what we should be doing. Your irresponsible measure of introducing a budget outside the Legislature is totally undercutting the whole democratic tradition in this province. You should recognize that's a serious mistake.

You talk about beautifying the roads in this province. You're going to do more to cut grass. Why don't we plant wildflowers and get the roads looking better that way?

You talk about the 10,000 Ontarians who participated in this process; 0.1% participated in this process.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Hon Mrs Johns:** At last.

**Mr Christopherson:** If you guys wouldn't heckle so loud. Given how many Liberals were speaking, I'll just mention that the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London talked about the budget a bit, and that gives me an opportunity to come back to this whole issue about balanced budgets. I don't think the point was quite taken on the either side of the aisle just yet that the Dominion Bond Rating Service has not only said this is not a balanced budget—remember, this is not partisan. This is one of the international bond rating agencies looked at by virtually every key investor.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Go there, David.

**Mr Christopherson:** I've got no problem going there. I'm not the one standing up bragging about five balanced budgets, I say to my friend from Durham. You are. Now the people who know the difference, who have no political axe to grind, are saying not only are you not balancing this year's budget, they're saying you didn't balance last year's budget. There was almost \$600 million—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Christopherson:** Listen to them heckle, Speaker. It tells you that obviously I'm touching a nerve. It upsets them to no end that somebody would dare suggest that their ability to manage the money may not be as perfect as they say, and yet there it is. It's interesting as to why the bond rating agencies are pointing this out. It's the same thing we said during last year's budget, which at least you had the decency to read here, and the so-called budget that was read elsewhere this time. Both times you show revenue of over \$2 billion to come from sales of assets unknown. Originally, it was going to be Hydro One. We want to know what it's going to be this year, because you didn't sell Hydro One last year. This is your second year with a budget that is not balanced.

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I'm very pleased to respond to the comments of the member for Brant and the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, who maybe weren't quite as frank as they could be in their presentation of numbers, or perhaps they were just a little unclear in the presentation of their numbers, because they were talking about \$22 billion.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Miller:** Well, one said \$21 billion and the other said \$22 billion—they were \$1 billion off—being added to the debt; that's probably true. But of course the government started in 1995, inheriting from the third party a \$12-billion debt, and then we worked actively to reduce that year after year, so that now in the last five years we've had a balanced budget and in fact have paid off \$5 billion of the debt. This is validated by the Provincial Auditor.

I wanted to have a moment to comment on the member from Nipissing, who was speaking earlier about some of the initiatives in the throne speech to do with northern Ontario. I think it's worth highlighting the new program coming out to do with nurses, free tuition for nurses who will practise in underserved areas in the north. This is going to be a real benefit for northern Ontario.

The member from Nipissing was speaking strongly about the various initiatives for northern Ontario, including the new teaching hospital that's going to be located in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, and also the \$1 billion for cancer research that was highlighted in the throne speech. Having just attended the funeral of my friend Gord Lomas last week, who died of cancer, I think this is a very good investment to be making toward trying to beat this disease which affects so many of us.

**Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):** I'm pleased to join the debate on the throne speech, along with my colleagues from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Brant, Ottawa Centre and Hamilton West.

I'd just like to correct one thing that was said across the way about free tuition for rural medical students and nurses. It's actually not free; the medical students were here, and it's actually a fraction of the cost of their tuition. Initially it sounded like a great idea, it was a wonderful idea and we supported it, but if you look at the facts, it's not free. Check your facts with the medical students and you will see that many of them say it's

really not worth going into that kind of debt because it is not free tuition. I don't know what you have in mind for the nurses, but if it follows the same funding formula that you have for the medical students, then that isn't—

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** Not one person admitted to a northern medical school turned it down.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Actually, that's not true; another untruth across the way. A lot of students have turned down the tuition because it is a flawed formula. You probably were not here the day—you probably had something important to do—the medical students came and explained that to you at the press conference. That's OK.

I think this is a good opportunity to bring up another point, that at the 11th hour, after over two years now of increased anxiety across the province of a double cohort, last week the government said they would fund the double cohort for universities—not colleges; universities. They said the criteria for entrance to universities would not change. There are two large universities to date that have said that's not true. One is McMaster. They've already increased by 5% their entrance for arts and science, and Queen's says that out of the 40,000 applicants this year for 2,750 first-year undergraduate spots, they're only going to accept 200 because they are so underfunded. So let's be a little more truthful.

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**Mr O'Toole:** It's my pleasure to respond in two minutes. I caution viewers tonight that in the next few minutes I'll try to survey the landscape for them from our perspective.

I was quite surprised with the Liberals' comments. Most of them were not fully informed on the issues they spoke about. I'm most impressed with their lack of ability to address the real issue of the accumulated debt. Many of them weren't here in 1995, when their red book committed at the time not to reduce taxes. They committed to that. That's the Liberal plan. They committed over a number of years, in their document at the time, to eventually balance the books, which was the \$11-billion annual deficit. If you had done the numbers—

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** It's important that you pay attention here. If each year it was \$10 billion and it was four years, they would have added \$40 billion to the accumulated debt.

The point is what we have done, and it's hard for them to understand. There were three years between 1995 and around 1997 that we had to slow down the spending. You were spending 20% more each year in excess of revenue, so over two years we did increase the amount of debt by about \$16 billion. But it's clear, if you pay attention, that we balanced the budget actually two years, or a year and a half, ahead of time and as such we've now accumulated five annual balanced budgets.

I would say to the other side that I'm anxious to read—I have read many of their election propaganda booklets; most of them are wrong. There are 27 pages, and not one number in them. I challenge each of you,



because on the campaign trail you're in serious trouble because the people don't trust you. They don't trust the Liberals.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Mr Patten:** I appreciate the comments from the members for Hamilton West, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Hamilton Mountain and Durham. I look forward to his comments.

It seems many people are talking about the economic side of things. My colleague from Brant just reminded me that this government spent more in the past year, according to the Provincial Auditor, than any other government in the history of this jurisdiction called Ontario—\$75,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the whole year—close to \$700 million on consultants alone. They talk about downsizing but they obviously haven't learned how to manage consultants. They don't know how to hire consultants, they don't know how to see consultants deal with the task at hand—runaway costs, absolutely incredible—and these are the people who propagate the image of being good financial managers. The people of Ontario these days are beginning to see through that imagery, that it just ain't true.

While the member from Durham talks about things, remember that you borrowed the money and gave taxes away. You reduced taxes and borrowed money to pay for a balanced budget. It's costing you money. You added to the mortgage, you added to the accumulated debt, and that's why we have a bigger accumulated debt today. If that makes sense, it's like saying to somebody, "You'll only have to pay me \$100 for your mortgage, but do you know what? I'll just add the difference to your mortgage and you'll pay it later on." It's the same sort of thing, which is exactly what has happened with our hydro costs that we see are going to affect the province in that fashion.

I see my time is up, except to say that this is obviously a throne speech designed for an election. We are ready any particular time and we'll be happy to hit the trail.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr O'Toole:** It's my pleasure to rise this evening and respond to the speech from the throne. I should caution that I will be sharing my time with the member from Perth-Middlesex, who is anxious to speak on this issue as well, as are all members on this side of the House who know that it's difficult but necessary decisions that go along with the challenge of leadership in the province.

It's hard for me in a very humble way to frame the discussion here tonight in such a way that people have some confidence that what is being said is in fact what will be done or has been done, because what you've been hearing over the last 20 minutes or so is mostly fabricated speculation. Many of you realize that you ultimately have to be able to identify the speakers and their party.

I always like to refer to the federal government because it's not as direct a criticism. They promised to eliminate the GST and they promised to do all these things—solve the airport issue and all that stuff—and

that's basically the brand for the Liberals. The brand for the Liberals has always been stated and it has always been true. When David Peterson called the election at the end of their little term, he promised the people of Ontario that the budget was balanced. In fact, as Mr Christopher could tell you, the NDP ended up inheriting almost—I think it was about a \$4-billion shortfall in what they called a balanced budget. That's your record. That's what you're going to have to defend in the next election.

The people of Ontario spoke in 1995. They spoke in 1990, actually, when they took you out. They spoke again in 1995. They spoke again in 1999. They don't trust you.

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** No, that's your brand. You're going to have to work with what is.

*Interjections.*

**Mr O'Toole:** Honest to God, if you aren't paying attention—I'm trying to give you kind, legitimate advice.

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** Constructive criticism.

**Mr O'Toole:** Instructive advice and criticism.

So the record's very clear. It's very clear that in the last five years, there have been five balanced budgets. All of the naysayers voted against all of the tax policies of this government. In their discussions, they voted against every measure that made Ontario the strength of this country. That's a fact. They voted against every single measure to improve the tax competitiveness of every municipality, every small business, every retired citizen, every student working. Every single tax measure you voted against. In fact, I know what you stand for. You want to increase taxes, increase the bureaucracy and increase spending; we all know that. The people of Ontario know your message: that you're going to kowtow to the teachers' unions and to all the union groups. In fact, I believe we should find a way of making sure that the value for money, the services that the people of Ontario—is how this should be addressed.

But I must get back. I digress; I admit I was drawn into it a bit. But now I'm going back to the throne speech. I reviewed the comments made by Lieutenant Governor Bartleman. I read through them, and his respectful comments with respect to the health care workers are worth repeating. All of those, both the families and the individuals—our hearts go out to that issue of the tragedy that confronted those. I want to be on the record as commending the health care workers, doctors, nurses and other professionals for their outstanding courage at putting themselves at risk for the people of Ontario.

I'm absolutely disappointed, I'm shocked and disappointed, by the Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty challenging the very substance of the SARS debate. Calling for an inquiry earlier today really is a confrontational approach with the health care workers of this province—not trusting those health care workers. So that's the record we're dealing with.

I have to say that I do reflect on the throne speech, that speech which started out like this—many of you should

listen and pay a little closer attention: "It is the promise of Ontario that inspires our citizens—young and old—to hope, dream and achieve."

It's creating that environment, that environment where people have opportunity and hope—it's that very hope and opportunity that was diminished and denied under the NDP; a regressive regime, many would call it. But the people spoke on that, and they spoke on it in 1990 as well. All of the Liberal plans at the time were nothing more than false promises, in fact.

I look at the achievements that the people of Ontario have allowed us to pursue so far. I think one of the more controversial ones, Mr Speaker—and you would know this, I'm sure—is the issue of the education municipal tax portion for senior citizens. The other side, I understand—and they can refute this—are on record as saying they are not going to give the senior citizens of this province a single tax break.

**Mr Gerretsen:** No. You're wrong.

**Mr O'Toole:** That is the record, and I want to repeat that. It's absolutely discouraging. I talked to my very ill mother-in-law about how they're actually going to be taking money. Do you realize that there are 800,000 people living in Ontario who don't pay any tax at all? But many of them still pay federal Liberal tax. We have taken them off the tax rolls completely. If you had it your way, I understand every one of them—your brand is this, and I'm going to repeat it throughout my remarks this evening: you want to tax everyone to death, including the seniors.

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Don't try to ignore it or avoid it. You are for giving the taxes to the civil servants to squander. I believe that the proper tax policy is to have people feel that they should pay their share. Senior citizens in my riding are the most generous volunteers, to a drop. They give in other ways, and have given all of their lives, to make this country and this province the great place that we all share today.

Just one tax concession, I ask—I almost plead with you to allow the seniors to have this one small bit of recognition. It's about \$400 per senior citizen residence, for a hard-working 70-plus-year-old that you wouldn't give a single tax break to. I find that unconscionable. It almost brings tears to my eyes to think of how the ideology of the Liberals is such that there is not one tax cut, not even for retired, hard-working senior citizens, veterans and those people who have given their very lives for this great province.

But I think I'll have a look at the proper investments in the last couple of minutes that I have before my good friend from Perth-Middlesex gets up.

I must respectfully mention my riding, because Durham is kind of an ideal place to live, work and raise your family. It really is. It involves north Oshawa and Port Perry, Lake Scugog. Some of the communities are so terrific. The quality of life there is just breathtaking. The Oak Ridges moraine goes through it. I'm going to a meeting tomorrow night in what's referred to as the test

hill area. There are great steps that we've taken there. Orono is a nice community. Burkton, Blackstock, Tyrone. The names just come to me like poetry, really. Solina, for instance, is another community.

But what does this mean in pure economic terms to my constituents? I think of Clarington, where 30% of the people, according to the Statistics Canada report that I reviewed for the notes tonight, are on average earning \$7,000 more per year since 1996. The unemployment rate in Scugog—that's Port Perry, a beautiful community there—has dropped by 25%, and the average earner is now making \$5,427 more than they did in 1996. That means a family can make choices with the children, whether it's signing them up for hockey, buying them a set of rollerblades, getting them music lessons, giving them the quality of life that parents want to make choices about.

I meet those families at daycare centres and the Y. I was at the library just last week. They're an involved community. I look at Oshawa as a larger place. The unemployment rate has dropped an astounding, almost breathtaking 34%. In that community, the average worker made \$6,000 more in 2001 than they did in 1996. The tax cuts—the job is certainly not done there.

Now we're going to address tax policy specifically focused and geared to seniors and young working families. I'm excited to think of the election coming ahead, probably some time in the next year. I think of young people graduating from university. I remember in our leadership campaign, the Honourable Tony Clement, the health minister—a person who deserves all our recognition this evening for the work he's done on SARS—has got some remarkable ideas. In fact, when I look at the bench strength of this government, it must make you worry on the other side.

*Interjections.*

**Mr O'Toole:** No, seriously. When I think of Helen Johns, what she's done in agriculture; David Young—when he was Attorney General he was remarkable; now he's with Municipal Affairs. Tim Hudak in consumer and business services—I met with a group of people today that came to me and said, "You know, that Tim Hudak is with it. He understands." Jim Flaherty is probably the best voice for this province next to our Premier, Ernie Eves. Elizabeth Witmer, the Deputy Premier, has got more character and class than the other side.

It's a privilege for me to serve on this team and to work doggedly and persistently for the right issues, but I take the issues of seniors right close to heart because I'm in my 60th year. It's the energy I get from my colleagues on this side, the perseverance and commitment. I know we're on the right track. The future looks bright. The people of Ontario know it. We've got the right leader, we've got the bench strength and we've got the commitment from the people of Ontario to continue the job and not to turn back to the Liberal ways of tax and spend.

You've got a government you can trust. We're on the right track, Mr Speaker. I know you think probably this is the right way to go yourself. I wouldn't want to put words in your mouth.



At the end of the day—I don't think there's a vote on this tonight—in my view, we're on the right track.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** On behalf of the constituents of Perth-Middlesex, I'd like to add my comments on the throne speech tonight. I don't have all night to do it. My time is limited, but I want to take this opportunity to comment on keeping the economy strong to support health care and education; I want to comment on better health care for you and your family; I want to comment on education for the future. I want to comment on making government work even better. I want to comment on your communities, safe and strong. I want to comment on Ontario, growing beautifully, and on protecting the vulnerable.

I also have some other things I want to discuss tonight. I want to say a little bit about the SARS recovery. I'm very pleased with the strategy that was set out and followed by Premier Eves. Within an hour, a few minutes of being called and made aware by the medical officer of health of the details, he was in action. Some of you say, "Oh, I thought he was the same as the mayor and the Prime Minister." No. What you failed to understand was that our Premier now has a little different style than some. All you saw on television was the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health. I want you to know, and I'm telling you right now, that our Premier delegates responsibility to good people and good ministers. I want to tell you that was deliberate and was well thought out.

I'm happy the three parties could co-operate and pass the SARS Assistance and Recovery Strategy Act as quickly as possible so that the recovery could begin—the kind of co-operation that is rare in this House.

At this point, I would also like to give a pat on the back and a great big thank you—and that's not enough—and to demonstrate and articulate all the thanks and gratitude of my family and my community for the health workers of Ontario, who have contributed so much during this SARS crisis, the doctors and nurses and those on the front lines, the ambulance workers, the police who had to do their duties, and so on, going in to work each day in a recovery unit where you know you're treating somebody with that kind of disease. It's almost unimaginable how a health worker would feel doing that each day. I want to thank them.

One of the particular reasons I want to do that is that we had a patient in the small town I live in, Listowel, Ontario, who was separated as—I forget the two terms—a potential SARS patient. She came within the guidelines for that. For 10 days I believe our hospital not only did all the work we expect it to do 365 days a year, but went far and beyond. Thank goodness the results were not as they thought they might be, but they knew all of the precautions that they took; they were practising their trade in the most admirable manner.

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Our medical officer of health for the county of Perth, that I live in and represent, Dr Susan Tamblyn, has been down here in Toronto—

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Who?

**Mr Johnson:** I'll tell you who. She's a well-known doctor, an officer in our county, well experienced; she's a specialist in epidemics and pandemics and she's tried to educate all the province and her colleagues on that. She's been down here in Toronto. I talked to her and she said, "Bert, I'm lucky. One of the reasons I can be down there, putting this time into the team that is fighting SARS in Toronto, is because I have a resident who happened to consent to stay for a period of time to allow me to be down here." I asked her, "Are there things you need?" She said, "What we really need is communications. There is so much information." I can imagine this; they'll put out, "Wear a scarf," and an hour later they'll say, "Don't wear a scarf; wear a kerchief." Next time it will be, "Wear two of them." This information has to go out to every health care worker in Ontario, not just to the hospitals that are treating active patients. She said, "We need communications." I can understand that and I'll help her out in every way I can with that.

I said, "Should we be getting other health care workers from other provinces to come and help in this?" She said yes. I said, "Do you have workers who are burned out?" She said, "Our group hasn't. The front-line health care workers, the nurses and doctors, yes, but our team that's working behind the scene hasn't. But the reason they should be brought in is so that we can lend our experience and our expertise, the things we've learned, the things we're doing. We should be able to help to educate those people in other provinces that need and want that information and can benefit from it."

Tonight I would like to say to Dr Susan Tamblyn and all the people who work behind the scenes, to all those who delegated the responsibility to the people that they should have and did, like our Premier, to all the health care workers who were involved in the day-to-day, not only there but in Toronto, a great big thank you.

The SARS fallout is not restricted to the Toronto area. I have a farmer in my riding who raises ducks and geese. A good part of his business—and I don't know of how many hundreds of thousands, it's not small, and he's a good farmer—a lot of his trade is selling ducks and geese to Chinese restaurants. As everyone knows, that has taken a tremendous hit. So has his business. I said, "You'll get over that. That will come back." He said, "Yes, but all those other competitors for my trade, not only in ducks and geese but chickens and all those other commodities, are going to want to get their business too, so it won't be easy."

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to add some of my comments to the fantastic throne speech that was done by our Premier.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I too want to take a few moments to respond to the last two members as it relates to the SARS situation that has occurred here in Toronto and in Ontario, and first of all compliment and congratulate the health care workers who have been involved in this very tough situation, who have worked and gone beyond what society could possibly expect from them in dealing with the situation the best way they know how. Many of these

people I'm sure are bone-tired, and we all hope that the SARS situation will resolve itself fairly quickly.

That is not what the motion this afternoon, to call for a public inquiry, was all about. Some very legitimate questions are still out there. One of the questions I have is, why did this happen here in Toronto, where we had many people come on a daily basis to our international airport? It didn't happen in British Columbia, where they've got just as many people coming into our country from Asia. None of this happened in British Columbia. Are there different ways in which they handle infectious diseases in British Columbia?

I'm just talking as a layperson. I'm not attacking any of the health care workers in the Toronto area by doing that, but there are some questions out there. If we somehow think this is a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence, then we'd better think again. We have to be prepared for whatever comes next, and the best way to get to the bottom of all these issues is to hold a completely independent inquiry. That's what the motion was all about this afternoon.

**Mr Marchese:** There are a lot of members who in my view are wasting a whole lot of time talking about SARS. They're patting themselves on the back for the work they have done. Don't do that, because other than the health care professionals, your government has nothing to be proud of on this issue.

In British Columbia, the government was well aware of what was coming. They sent the alert to hospitals that this is an issue they should be dealing with, and they did. This was in mid-February. My assumption is that you people knew that too and that your leader knew it and that the Minister of Health knew that as well. I have no problem congratulating the heroes, ie, the health care professionals, who have shown incredible leadership on this issue. But please, for your sakes, try not to take any credit for anything you have done, because you've done nothing.

The only response you made was at the end, literally, of the solution for SARS, which was April 24, and nothing before that. You were in complete denial before that. Your Premier and your Minister of Health were nowhere to be seen, except when the minister went to Geneva with his bag, saying, "I'm going to defeat this thing; I'm going to lick this thing to the ground." That's the only time he did anything. Prior to that, he was nowhere to be seen. Please don't embarrass yourselves any more than you have to.

Our health care providers did a great job of protecting us as best they could. I have nothing but praise for them. But for you, please, the quieter you are, the better.

**Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** It's a pleasure to rise and contribute tonight to the debate on the throne speech. I always enjoy the comments of my good friend and colleague from Durham. I hear so much about the Scugog-Port Perry place and how beautiful it is—poetic in fact—absolutely bucolic, so I'll have to take a chance and visit there.

I have had the chance to visit the riding of my friend from Perth-Middlesex on a number of occasions. He had

me there in a previous capacity in Milverton for a new arena, which he championed. That new arena is now up and open in Milverton. In St Marys it's the St Marys library, I remember.

I spent some time in Listowel as well, with my wife coming from Listowel. I've got to tell you that Bert Johnson is very popular in the Listowel area. They remember very well when he brought the Premier to Listowel to talk about the future of that hospital, which remains open and strong and growing today.

The one area I really enjoyed, in addition to the descriptions of the ridings, was the member's comments particularly about tax cuts. One issue that's getting a lot of resonance in the area of Lincoln, particularly among seniors, is the rebate for seniors. I think of that senior couple in Port Colborne or Dunnville at the end of the month, lined up, trying to figure out how to pay their bills on a fixed income. The notion of rebating the property tax they've been paying into the system for decades, for generations, giving them back some money at the end of the year to help: I don't see any problem with that. It's a great idea. Helping seniors with some tax relief is an outstanding policy idea and I strongly support it, as do the seniors back in Erie-Lincoln, seniors who helped to build this country, helped to build this province. What's wrong with a bit of a reward at the end of the day by eliminating that tax for seniors? I know the members across the floor are against it. They don't like tax cuts. They revile tax cuts; they're firmly against tax cuts.

If there's only one thing McGuinty ever said that he has stuck to, it's that he's against tax cuts. But I thought I heard the member for Kingston and the Islands mention tonight, "Just you wait. There's something coming for seniors in the tax cut department." Are we going to see another Dalton McGuinty flip-flop when it comes to the seniors' tax credit?

2040

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** I want to address a number of issues that I don't think the honourable members addressed in their comments on the throne speech, but which stood out for me. I'm a little bit surprised the honourable members haven't mentioned them.

I know they like to talk about their support for tax cuts. They also like to put it in the context of their supposed support for balanced budgets. I would have thought they would have wanted to talk about the concern of Dominion Bond Rating Service, which came out today and said, "This government does not have a balanced budget. This government has a \$1.9-billion deficit in this current budget." That is exactly what the Toronto-Dominion Bank said when it saw that \$2-billion worth of assets were to be sold and the minister could not identify what those assets were if the budget was ever to be balanced.

Some of us actually believe that you should have true balanced budgets, that if you're going to make the commitments in health and education, you simply can't afford to have the tax cuts if you want to keep a real



balanced budget, not the illusion of one, which Dominion Bond Rating Service certainly blew apart this afternoon.

I'm surprised the members opposite didn't want to talk about the public health aspects of the throne speech where the government wants to talk about its commitment to public health. I wish we had heard that commitment somewhere, anywhere, over the past two years. Time and time again we've raised the cutbacks in public health programs, this government's willingness to see mandatory public health programs go unfunded because they downloaded the responsibility for public health to municipalities without any concern about whether municipalities could afford the programs.

The minister wants to talk about public health spending increases when we know that those were purely and solely for exceptional circumstances, like West Nile virus. I'm surprised the government didn't want to talk about how much it cut from public health when it fired the five scientists. One of those scientists had a responsibility for looking at resistance to superbugs. What could have been more valuable this week?

**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Mr O'Toole:** It's clear we generated some interest in the remarks earlier on the throne speech. I appreciate the comments from the member for Perth-Middlesex. He was right on topic. The member for Kingston and the Islands: he seems to be getting most of it. The member for Trinity-Spadina: I always like his sparkling remarks, mostly inaccurate, but I enjoy them.

The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, I think, is a good place to start and end. She was here when David Peterson beguiled the people of Ontario with the closing budget and the quickly and hastily called election. They saw the economy going into the tank after three years and they kind of fudged the books, so to speak. A balanced budget: it's still being talked about as the greatest shell game on record. She really didn't get it. It's clear from her policies when she was leader—she got bounced off the radar screen, a nice person and all that—that she didn't get it then, and she doesn't get it now, that there is a relationship between revenue and tax policy. It's a shame, really that the two—it's the tax policies that have allowed us to make the inordinate investments in health care.

I'm only going to dwell on one policy area. They committed to not changing health care spending. We committed to increasing health care spending. In fact, we've exceeded \$10 billion. It's almost a 50% increase in health care alone since 1995—\$10 billion; 17.4 or 17.3, some would argue about that point, but it's now in excess of \$28 billion.

If I look at my riding of Durham—it's important to always bring things back to the people I'm accountable to on those things I have some responsibility for—for instance, Lakeridge Health Corp's budget has gone from \$140 million in 1995 to over \$200 million. That's a 43% increase. Durham Regional Cancer Centre is being located there, bringing services closer to people, and there are 1,200 new long-term-care beds.

The job's not done. We need another—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Further debate?

**Mr Gerretsen:** I'm very pleased to speak in this debate, the first opportunity I've had since about December 15 of last year. I will be sharing my time with the member from Davenport.

Let me first of all say that I congratulate the government. Yes, I congratulate the government, for at least having the decency to have the throne speech presented in this chamber. I'll tell you, after the budget was presented in the automotive plant I had visions that from now on we would be hearing throne speeches—I don't know—at the Air Canada Centre, in the SkyDome, in some school gymnasium or what have you. All of the discussion that took place about that ill-fated infomercial of the budget probably couldn't have been said any better than it was by Mr Sean Conway of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I cannot remember an issue over the last eight years on which literally every daily newspaper in the province of Ontario editorialized about their ill-fated attempt to basically do away with our democratic traditions of having the budget presented here in the House. So at least we're here—maybe for three or four days—listening to the throne speech.

Let me deal with the senior citizen tax issue. Let there be no mistake about it. Every one of us in here is in favour of tax cuts. We would all like to pay as little tax as possible. Who wouldn't like to pay less in taxes? The problem is that we cannot afford it. You cannot on the one hand say, "Hey, taxpayers, we no longer need your money," and on the other hand say, "We're going to invest more in hospitals, universities, schools etc." It doesn't make any sense. It didn't make any sense before, and it doesn't make any sense now.

Let's deal with the education tax credit. The first thing we have to remember is that two years ago the government said the education portion of our property taxes was going to be reduced by 20% universally. They implemented the first 10%. What did they do with the next 10%? Well, last year they delayed it for a year, and this year they basically got away with it. So that's a promise they didn't keep. They were going to reduce everybody's education portion of their property tax bill by 10%, and they're not going to do it.

What they've said instead is, "We're going to do it for senior citizens, for people over 65." That's going to cost the treasury of the province something like \$500 million. I wish we could do it, but we can't do it, because with the system they've set up, as has already been heard before, if you've got a house that is assessed much higher than another house, you're going to get a much greater portion of the money. On average, I guess, it's going to be something like \$425 per housing unit, but some people—if you live in a \$5-million home, we've already heard tonight, you're going to get \$20,000 back. In a \$250,000 home, you will get about \$670 back. So let there be no mistake about it; the higher value your property has, the more money you are going to get back. It's going to cost us \$500 million. So I say, is that the best way to spend \$500 on behalf of the seniors in this province?

We've got a better way to do it. It's contained in our platform. It has been costed out as well. I had the privilege over the last eight or nine months to be the critic for long-term care. We did quite an extensive study as to what it would cost to first of all bring the nursing homes and the long-term-care homes in this province up to the point whereby at least there is an average of nursing and personal care that is on average with the 10 jurisdictions that the government itself studied in the Pricewaterhouse report. The cost of that is \$250 million. That would provide for adequate nursing and personal care in the nursing homes that simply isn't available for everybody.

Now, am I attacking the individuals who work in these nursing homes? Of course not. The problem simply is this: with people becoming frailer and needing more and more help in nursing homes, you need more people to look after their needs properly. That's going to cost \$250 million. What's it going to cost to get the community care access centres enough money so that they can provide community care for those individuals who either come out of hospitals and need some post-acute care in their own homes or people who are suffering from chronic care problems? According to the association, it's going to cost an immediate \$294 million in order to bring the home care system to the point whereby those people who need it in this province are actually getting it.

2050

So the long and the short of it is this: I say that rather than spending that \$500 million on all the seniors in the province, in a very disproportionate way, why don't we spend that money for those people who live in our nursing homes, who live in our long-term-care homes, who need home care at home? Many of these people have been cut off over the last four to five years.

I say it's the government's responsibility to look after those individuals who, through whatever circumstance, particularly if they're elderly and frail, cannot look after themselves. That, to my way of thinking, is a much more responsible way to get that \$500 million in benefits to our senior citizen population, because most of the people who require home care and who live in our nursing homes and long-term-care homes are senior citizens. I would strongly suggest that that's done.

Then we've gone one step further, as has already been mentioned earlier today. I will just read you two very simple paragraphs that are contained in our platform dealing with home care. It states as follows:

"Romanow identified home care as an essential component of modern medicare. Our long-term vision"—vision, something you people haven't had, if you ever had it, in a long time—"is to make home care a medically necessary service." Let me tell you, I am personally totally convinced of that: that if we want to make sure that people do not need to stay in hospitals as long as they do, or if we want to make sure they can stay in their own home as long as possible before they go to a nursing home or a home for the aged, we'd better make sure that they have the necessary home care there to do it. If we're

not doing that, all we're doing is pushing people quicker and quicker into these long-term-care facilities.

What we go on to say is, "Our first step is to get our vulnerable and elderly the services they need. We will remove the arbitrary Harris-Eves limits on home care." We've all heard the stories from people, where you can't get more than 60 hours a month and you say—and I questioned the minister about this during estimates—"Well, what if somebody needs 70 or 80 hours per month and they don't have the means to pay for the extra 10 or 20 hours? What happens in that case?" Well, we all know what happens in that case. That person gets put in an institution at a much higher cost than it would be to pay for the extra 10 or 20 hours per month.

So we say, "Look, if it's going to cost a person, let's say, \$3,000 per month in a long-term-care facility and as a society we're only willing to give \$1,700 to \$1,800 per month for their home care—at most—why don't we increase that to at least the level it would cost to keep that person in a long-term-care facility?" They would have the benefit of still staying in their home environment, which is what they would prefer. Every survey, every study has indicated that: if you give a person a choice, they will stay in their own home as long as the services are there. That's our commitment in that regard.

There are many other things to say. In the last minute and a half that I have left, I just want to talk about my bill; it's now Bill 6. Let me just very quickly read the name of this bill, because it has been talked about many, many times. The Minister of Finance, or the Premier when he was the Minister of Finance, in 1996 said he was going to implement this. It was contained in the 1999 throne speech. It's again contained in this throne speech. That is the bill that I have introduced on two separate occasions here, back as Bill 180 and later on Bill 5 and now Bill 6. It's exactly the same bill. It has been given first and second reading. It was unanimously approved in committee. That's the bill called An Act to amend the Audit Act to provide for greater accountability of hospitals, universities, colleges and other organizations that receive grants or other transfer payments from the government or Crown agencies.

I am absolutely committed that when we spend money as a government we should be spending it as if it came out of our own pocket. The only way we can ensure that the money truly goes toward the purposes for which it was intended through these transfer agencies is if we give the Provincial Auditor the right to follow that money that we give to these transfer agencies.

So I say to the government once again: pass this bill. It has been given second reading on two different occasions now, and yet at the same time you haven't had the guts to call the bill forward. The work has been done. Pass it and we will have some true accountability.

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I am delighted to join in the debate on the budget.

I was somewhat surprised tonight to hear some of the most partisan speeches and remarks I've ever heard, especially from the member from Durham, when he says,



"The Liberals are going to tax you to death," and of course the taxes collected are going to be squandered by bureaucrats, and on and on he went. I suppose an election is in the air. He mentioned something very interesting. He said the election won't be called until next year. My prediction is that you're going to be calling the election within the next 14 days. That's my prediction.

While we're making these speeches tonight, the Conservative backbenchers know full well that the government right now is poring over the new statistics, over the new polls, and is looking at them with a view to calling the election any time; in fact, any minute. So while we're speaking tonight, they're thinking, "Are we going to call it tomorrow? Are we going to call it the next day?" Just wait for the numbers to be right, and off they go. We've seen your capabilities tonight. That's why we've had these partisan comments. I think it's really beneath us to have the member from Durham say that we, the Liberals, will tax you to death.

Like my honourable colleague says, of course, everyone wants to have taxes reduced. There's no doubt about that. But the real question is, can we afford it at this time? You know as well as I do that this budget is not balanced. You know as well as I do there are \$2 billion, roughly, that somehow have been skewed or somehow are trying to be hidden. We know all about that; it's in the papers. Anybody can be informed about that. But to tell us that we're going to be the tax-and-spend party and you're going to be the ones who are going to provide the tax credit is really ridiculous. That is not true and that is simply not a fact.

We have different priorities. Our priorities are spelled out by our leader when he says quite clearly, "Given a choice between investing in health care or borrowing for a tax cut, I will choose health care every time. I will choose health care any time over a tax cut." Is that the truth or not? Would you rather have a tax cut than see health care being reduced in terms of its services? Was it not the Conservative government that closed down emergency care for the city of Toronto? Was it not the Conservative government that wouldn't even let ambulance drivers get into the hospitals? Yes, I remember that. I remember in my own riding that the nearest hospital would not permit ambulance drivers to get those cases into those hospitals where they belonged. They had to go way out, far outside the city of Toronto. What a shame. And today you're telling me that we are tax-and-spend and you're going to be the big tax savers.

You want to be known as the people who are going to run this province efficiently, but you have to look to the Liberals and you have to steal some of the ideas from the Liberals to make you effective. If you wouldn't steal from us, you wouldn't have very much in this budget.

I'm going to ask you something: if the Conservatives were really interested in cutting down on the budget and saving good taxpayers' money, would they present these kinds of wonderful, glossy brochures, three of them, within a period of 90 days? Three glossy brochures. Would they put these out if they were really interested in

saving taxpayers' money? Mr Speaker, that is almost shameful. It's partisan. You know it and I know it, and I think the people of Ontario, looking at these brochures, will know what this is all about. This is getting you ready for an election that you're going to be calling very soon.

**2100**

Then the member for Durham said, "The poor seniors. It's the Liberals who are going to break down the barrier, and they're going to be sorry for ever voting for the Liberals. In terms of spending money, the Liberals will not spend money for seniors; it's only going to be the Conservatives."

The opposite is true. The question is this: who introduced the \$2 user fee for seniors? Was it the Liberals or was it the Conservatives? It is clear that it was the Conservatives. Who introduced the fee for long-term care? Was it the Liberals or was it the Conservatives? It was the Conservatives. Who, then, is a friend of the seniors? Is it the Liberals or is it the Conservatives?

**Mr Marchese:** It's got to be the Liberals.

**Mr Ruprecht:** No doubt about it. Even my friend from the NDP agrees it's the Liberals who are the real friends of senior citizens.

Do you know what? In the latest seniors' brief that we just received a few days ago they make it very clear where they're going to be standing.

**Mr Marchese:** Where are they going to stand?

**Mr Ruprecht:** They are looking very closely at this budget and they are not finding very much in there to be jubilant about. Many of them are going to wait for the Liberals to take over, because the Liberals will be ready. The Liberals will have a document that will be friendly to seniors. It certainly won't be the Conservatives, that's for sure.

**Mr Marchese:** Hey, guys, you've got to clap.

**Mr Ruprecht:** Thank you very much.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm just trying to help you out.

**Mr Ruprecht:** Let me tell you something else: money for the cities. In this budget, advertised all over Ontario, is there money for the cities? What about here in Toronto, where we come from? What about gridlock? Are the Conservatives going to do anything about gridlock? They haven't got the faintest idea of how to solve the problem. Have they studied it? Have they looked at it? Have they provided any incentives for the city to save money? Have they provided any incentives for the cities to get their hands on provincial coffers, on provincial money, to help the cities out with their problems? What I hear—

**Mr Marchese:** But the Liberals—

**Mr Ruprecht:** No, we don't want to be too partisan about this. The people at the doors are saying to me quite clearly, "Mr Ruprecht, fix the holes in the roads." For sure it's not really a provincial matter, but we all know that some of the money can come from the province to the cities, and the province can certainly help the city of Toronto in its budget because there is no money left. The city is forced to increase taxes for seniors simply because you have screwed up the tab. We need money for cities

in terms of cleaner streets, better garbage removal and, as I said earlier, to solve the problem of the terrible gridlock in Toronto.

What about Hydro? Have we already forgotten that the reason you needed money for a tax cut was because you wanted to sell Hydro? You wanted to privatize Hydro. They wanted to make sure that Hydro is sold so they then could take the money, those billions of dollars, and ensure that this ends up, in the budget, in general revenue so they could pay off—to some degree help some of their friends. I'm thinking especially of the sell-off of Highway 407, but that's another story for another time.

The result of all this was sky-high hydro rates. Wasn't that a fact all summer long last year? Wasn't it a fact until recently, until the Premier decided that we've got to do something about it? Why? Simply because, "We are going to lose the election. People in Ontario are not ready to pay sky-high hydro rates, so therefore let's stop it," and therefore no Hydro sale. It may be temporary. We don't know what they're going to do next time around.

Are we going to trust them? Are we ready to trust that the Conservatives will not change their minds and again try to sell Hydro or try to come up with another scheme, a scheme that may be different again, which may look at another budget plan and change the hydro laws around again? Hydro privatization is not on our agenda; it is on your agenda. Hydro privatization is not on the Liberal agenda. It's on the Conservative agenda, and you know it.

What about schools? What about the nurses? What about access to trades and professions? There's a whole list here that's not in the budget, and we would request—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Questions and comments.

**Mr Marchese:** It's hard not to laugh, but I want to say two things to the member for Davenport. He talks about Hydro and accuses the Tories only of wanting to sell Hydro. By extension, Tony, the member for Davenport, says, "We were always opposed to it." As the member from Niagara said, "We have lots of quotes. Marchese has lots of quotes too about where the Liberals stood on that issue." You were neck and neck, cheek by jowl with the Tories about selling Hydro One. Isn't that true, David? It is true. But you've got Tony, just prior to an election, with signs over there on Davenport saying, "We're opposed to the sale of Hydro One." It's a funny, amusing thing to see Tony going out in his community. His party takes one position, and John Gerretsen says—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** John, hold on. I've got a few things to say. Hold on. I've only got two minutes.

You've got Tony out there with a sign saying, "We're opposed to the sale of Hydro One," and you've got his leader saying, "We're for it." Only when the public was about to beat you guys up, they said, "Oh, time to skedaddle and say we're on the side of the NDP. We're against the sell-off too." Tony, you've got to be careful. It's a bit too amusing.

I was going to talk about the tax issue, the seniors' tax benefit, but I'll have 20 minutes soon. For those of you who are still watching after all this, I'll be here in about five or six minutes to give my 20 minutes or so. But I've got to tell you, Tony, be careful in what you say, right? You get caught in things you ought not to be saying. You and your other buddies there and your other women friends, surely you are smiling about the fact that you have a different—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Further questions or comments?

**Mr Johnson:** I'm pleased to have an opportunity to get up and congratulate my colleagues from Kingston and the Islands and Davenport for having the fortitude to get up and say the things they did. But I did want to contradict, correct or whatever some of the information, maybe. I believe the member for Davenport said that somebody said the election is going to be next year. Somebody with the education that the member for Davenport held himself out as having should know that the member for Durham did not say that at all. He said, "The election will be sometime within the next year." If that is the same thing, then I think it's something like saying, "The Liberal Party is all for tax breaks and good government and health care and so on," and we all know it isn't. It's code for "tax, borrow and spend."

We know that because of what we hear. We heard it. I can remember that for two years after 1995 they wanted instant results. They were over there, "Uh, uh, uh, where are the jobs?" Now the jobs are here, and what are they saying? "It's because of the States." Dalton McGuinty went to the States. He went over to get his hair done and learn how to speak, and which was his good side and his bad side and so on. What he picked up over there was that he should have term governments. Yes. The 50 states over there and the federal government—one of the planks in your platform that you forgot to tell us about: four years for an election. He forgot to tell us, but that's what he learned in the States when he went over there for lessons. I wanted to add those to the comments.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I want to congratulate the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Davenport. They have delivered the message we hear at our constituency office every day. I could tell you that we are getting those messages from the people concerned, especially when we refer to the municipal education tax cut. It probably would have been different if you had said that we would impose a cap on the value of the house and also the maximum earnings that you are getting. But today having to pay back \$450 million to rich people, I would not support at any time. If I look at this gentleman we had in the paper this week with his salary of \$58 million a year, he's going to save about \$50,000 a year in municipal taxes.

**2110**

Also, we talk about improving the disability program. Look in the budget. Where do we talk about the disability program? Nowhere in the budget do we refer to that.



Those people have been on a pension of \$930 a month for the last nine years. We never considered increasing their program.

We talk about the \$750-million infrastructure program for the municipalities. I have to say that in my riding right at the present time, in Glengarry the towns of Alexandria and Glen Robertson are still waiting for their money, for the approval, to upgrade their water plant and sewage treatment plant. Where is the money? We have only spent a quarter of what we set four years ago. We haven't gone ahead. Is that because the government hasn't got the money? According to the newspaper today, in the *Toronto Sun*, we are going for around a \$2-billion deficit this year.

**Mrs McLeod:** I, too, want to congratulate my colleagues from Kingston and the Islands and Parkdale for their contribution to this throne speech debate. I'm really pleased the member for Kingston and the Islands began his contribution by remarking on the fact that at least the throne speech was delivered in the chamber. At least this government gave members the courtesy of hearing its throne speech in the Legislative Assembly, according to practice and precedent, if I dare to quote the government's own House leader. But I have to say that the statement in the throne speech about this government making a commitment to democratic government and an improved role for members of the Legislative Assembly absolutely takes the breath away. It is absolutely bizarre coming from the government. Imagine a government talking about a new role for members, a stronger role for individual members, when they have just kept individual members sitting outside the Legislature for some 128 days. We've sat less in this Legislature, had less debate, that with any previous government in the history of this province.

This is the government that introduced these evening sittings, not so we could have more debate, oh no, because we're not in the House long enough to have debates; it was so you wouldn't have question period. What about democratic government? How about a government that has used closure more than any other government in the history of the Parliament of Ontario? How about a government that in clear contempt of this Legislature delivered its so-called budget speech in an auto parts plant? It really took the breath away to have this government, in a muted reaction to the public outrage at the contempt this government has consistently shown for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reached its peak when they delivered their infomercial at Magna International—it really was a meek response to suggest this government would do anything about democracy in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Mr Ruprecht:** I want to thank the members from Trinity-Spadina, Perth-Middlesex, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Thunder Bay-Atikokan for their comments. First, let me address myself quickly to the member for Trinity-Spadina. I remember very clearly when the Liberals were out there with their signs saying, "We oppose

the selling of Hydro. We oppose the selling of the transmission sets. We oppose the selling of the Hydro lands. We oppose the selling of Hydro One." What happened with the NDP? Let me quickly tell you something that really happened.

There were about 100 of us standing there, trying to convince the public that the Conservatives were wrong in terms of selling Hydro, yet the NDP bus suddenly pulled up out of nowhere with their big signs. Out jumped Peter Kormos and Shelley and a few other people with their cameras, trying to film everybody who was there at our demonstration because they were so—for some reason I thought we were together on this. I thought we were together in stopping the sale and privatization of Hydro One. I thought we were together. I was really shocked to see them jump out of the bus, trying to oppose us—yes, trying to oppose us—passing out leaflets and passing out flyers and acting like a bunch of jealous teenagers. That was not a party with a plan. Those were persons who were jealous of a position where we might have gotten some publicity that they didn't want us to get.

It is clear that in terms of this budget, there are some things that are still amiss; namely, what about the money for ESL programs? Were they not supposed to be expanded? Is it not true that over 130,000 people come here from foreign countries trying to call Canada home? They need English as a second language. They need English as a primary language. They need English to function here. They need English—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Sit down. Further debate?

**Mr Marchese:** I'm very happy to have this opportunity to discuss the throne speech, and happy to begin by responding to the member for Davenport. I've got to say to the member for Davenport, if you come here and regularly debate the issues, you might discover that your leader and others are on the record as supporting the sell-off of Hydro One and deregulation. Only when pressure built so strongly against the government did the Liberals decide to hightail it out of that position and find themselves another cozy position, and only then did they find themselves on the same political playing field as the NDP.

But, Tony, please don't go around telling your constituents—because I don't want to say you're not telling the truth in here, but people know. They have the quotes about where your leader stands. Now, you can say Tony Ruprecht was and is against the sale of Hydro One, generation of power, whatever else you want to say, but don't say "we" and don't say "the Liberals." Don't do that, because then you have people like Marchese saying, "Tony, you just can't have it both ways."

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean):** Sure you can.

**Mr Marchese:** I know they want to. I know that. I know that Tony wants it. I know Gerretsen wants it and all the other members want it. But you can't have it both

ways; you can't, not all of the time. Sometimes you can, sometimes you get away with it, but sometimes you can't, especially when you put yourself on the record. If you're going to say you weren't for it, don't put it in print, because that leaves a trail, you see? You leave a trail that both Tories and New Democrats will follow, because we're always sniffing around for these things, right? Not just us, but the general public sniffs around for these things. So anyway, Tony, you and the other members who are here in this chamber: please, let's not say much more on that.

The other issue was an unfair criticism of the Liberals by the Tories that I heard tonight, where you say that the Liberals want to tax and have the bureaucrats spend. They say they don't want to tax anyone—I know that—so you might be a tad unfair to them. I just want to put that on the record, because they say, "We will increase services, not increase taxes"—that's what they say—"and balance the budget." Only Liberals could do that. It's a remarkable alchemy that is only possible by those who have the power to make things happen like that, to increase services, which, by the way, cost money, not increase taxes—I don't know how you do that—and balance the budget. But that's what they say to you, good citizens and good taxpayers watching this program. Do you believe it's possible? I don't think it is. I don't think you can do both and balance the budget.

Here's what I think the Liberals will have to do if they get elected—God forbid, but they could. They will either reduce services to balance the budget or, God forbid, because they don't want to see it, increase taxes. Which one—

**Hon Mrs Johns:** Or not balance the budget.

**Mr Marchese:** Or not balance the budget—this is true—and deal with that issue. You're quite right. They've got three options: eliminate your bill that says you've got to have balanced budgets—you could do that; increase taxes—you could do that; reduce services, and you could do that. They could do either one of those things or many of those things—you pick—but those are the options the Liberals have. I say that with the current dollars we have, neither the Conservatives can balance a budget—dare I say it—but neither can the Liberals. Neither of the two of you can do it.

2120

**Mrs McLeod:** And you?

**Mr Marchese:** And we? We'll tax. Here's what we say.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Julia, this is what we say. Hold on. What we say to the public is the following: if you want a good health care system, it costs money. You can do what the Tories are doing and privatize. Either way, it's going to come out of your pocket. You're going to pay. You can do that, or you can have a public health care system that we pay that remains in public control.

You can have a public education system that the Tories have eroded, destroyed and are now trying to put some dollars back, but if you want a strong public

education system, it costs money. If you want good social services for seniors, people with disabilities, those who suffer abuse, young people, old people, seniors, women, children, if you want to be able to provide for the services so that we have a civil society, a human society, it costs money.

You might say you want a good, strong environment and policies that protect our health and yours for future generations. We say, that costs money. If you don't want to pay for it, elect the Tories and elect the Liberals because you're going to get to the same road. With the Liberals it won't be as fast and it would be less damaging, but you get to the same conclusion really.

We, New Democrats, argue that for all the services I mentioned, if we want them, we have to pay for them. If the corporations refuse to pay their fair share, then we are on our own through income taxes, through the PST, the sales tax or user fees. There isn't much more than that. If that is the only option, where the corporate sector decides they're out of it, they're not paying their fair share, the only ones left are us. In that society, what you will get is a very Darwinian society where the wealthy will do fine by those policies, but those who are not so wealthy are on their own.

We don't think that makes for a good, healthy, civil, human society, but that's where the Tories are leading us to. The Liberal policies are not far behind. Much is made of the claim that they have a heart. They're not far behind the Tories in this regard.

So we say to people that our income tax is the fairest way to tax people to provide the services we need. If you don't like paying income taxes, then accept the fact you will have reduced services in health care, education, environment, social services, culture, natural resources, Ministry of Labour and so on, because that's the conclusion we're facing.

When you accuse the Liberals of wanting to tax, they clearly say they're not taxing, but I'm telling you, they won't be able to balance the budget and they will have to reduce services in order to get there. There's no other way of doing it. It is true that the Liberals are saying they will take back the \$700 million of the corporate taxes you have already made—not \$2.2 billion; we're not there yet. The Liberals keep on giving you, good citizens, a \$2.2-billion figure that they're taking back from the corporations. The Tories have only given out \$700 million. That's all that's been spent. The Liberals will tell you, "We're taking \$2.2 billion back." If the election were to be called next week, all they've got in their little pockets is \$700 million.

They also say they would take the tax credit given for private schools, and that's worth \$500 million. I am telling you, that's only worth \$50 million, more or less.

All the Liberals have to spend is \$750 million, plus whatever other tax measures they might want to spend—tax tobacco, presumably, and maybe a few other things. They don't have a lot of money for their \$7-billion-and-more promises. They don't. They just don't have the money. So when you say they're going to tax, I'm telling



you, just to give them some credit, they don't have the money to keep their promises.

Back to the throne speech, because it brought some amusement to my mind as I read it: it says, "Your government believes that strong leadership is about consultation, not capitulation." I don't know what that means. I know what "capitulation" means, but I don't know what "capitulation" means in relation to what and/or to whom. It was a very odd construct. But I thought, "This government is about consultation?" Since when has Harris ever been known to—

**Mrs Munro:** He's not here any more.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, he's not here any more. Yes, I beg your pardon. Ernie Eves is here, and he's doing a whole lot of consulting. Yes.

Remind the good citizens: this government, its members, do not have a good history of consultation; they do not. They are so antidemocratic that we have never seen a government like it before. So when they tell you they want to consult and not capitulate—whatever "capitulation" means—don't believe them. Their history belies that notion that they want to consult.

Moving on with more humour: "They have called for schools that promote excellence and equality of opportunity." Their education policies—and they've got a couple of teachers who would know—have caused so much more failure in our school system than any other government prior. With their curriculum changes and the

elimination of the so-called grade 13, they have caused so much chaos in the system that students who are studying or were studying at the so-called basic level are dropping out by the thousands. And only in the last month has the Minister of Education gone to one school to say, "We are committing \$50 million for at-risk kids." It took so long for Minister Witmer and the new Premier to come to the conclusion that they had to help those students whom they have literally pushed out of the education system because of the so-called reforms they made.

Not once, in spite of all the advice they got from so many educators, did they understand or accept the fact that they had caused a problem—not once. And only in the last month did they commit \$50 million to help the so-called at-risk students. That's called a government that listens and consults? After eight years of being in government, after so many years of causing so many problems, you speak of that as something good the government has done, that they're listening? Ha.

Speaker, let me know when my time is up. I can't see the clock.

**The Acting Speaker:** You have a perfect sense of timing. It is now 9:30 of the clock.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 2128.*

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Boutrogianni, Marie (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	<b>Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen</b> (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston Centre / -Centre	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	Lanark-Carleton	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Don Valley West / -Ouest	<b>Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
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Erie-Lincoln	<b>Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim</b> (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	<b>Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda</b> (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		



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Mississauga South / -Sud Nepean-Carleton	Marland, Margaret (PC) <b>Baird, Hon / L'hon John R.</b> (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint	Scarborough-Agincourt Scarborough-Rouge River Simcoe North / -Nord Simcoe-Grey	Phillips, Gerry (L) Curling, Alvin (L) Dunlop, Garfield (PC) <b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Oak Ridges	<b>Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports		Bartolucci, Rick (L) <b>Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R.</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Oakville	<b>Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary</b> (PC) Speaker / Président	Thunder Bay-Atikokan Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord Timiskaming-Cochrane Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	McLeod, Lyn (L) Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Ottawa Centre / -Centre Ottawa-Orléans	Patten, Richard (L) <b>Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian</b> (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		Smitherman, George (L)
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Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean Ottawa-Vanier Oxford	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)  Boyer, Claudette (Ind) <b>Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement		Arnett, Ted (PC) <b>Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Parkdale-High Park Parry Sound-Muskoka Perth-Middlesex Peterborough Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Kennedy, Gerard (L) Miller, Norm (PC) Johnson, Bert (PC) Stewart, R. Gary (PC) <b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet</b> (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Willowdale  Windsor West / -Ouest Windsor-St Clair York Centre / -Centre York North / -Nord York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston York West / -Ouest	<b>Young, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Pupatello, Sandra (L) Duncan, Dwight (L) Kwinter, Monte (L) Munro, Julia (PC) Cordiano, Joseph (L)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 7 May 2003

Mercredi 7 mai 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
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Greffier  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### CONSIDERATION OF BILL 7

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** Yesterday I asked this House for unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 7. Bill 7 is a short, one-page bill. The bill simply includes the customers of Great Lakes Power in the rural rate assistance program that applies to Hydro One customers and a number of other local distribution companies.

This bill would have the immediate effect of bringing the outrageous distribution charges in the Great Lakes Power area in line with other electricity distribution companies. This bill will help the people of Wawa, Dubreuilville, Hawk Junction, Laird, Desbarats, St Joseph Island, Searchmont, Goulais, Havilland Bay, Batchawana, Echo Bay and other communities within the service area. It would make the bills in Bruce Mines the same as the ones in Wharnccliffe, who are customers of Hydro One.

Even though Howard Hampton and the NDP are blocking this bill, the government can move. It can include Great Lakes Power customers in rural rate assistance by regulation. It can address the problems with the rates by regulation. It can move now and it can move swiftly. Next Wednesday, the cabinet should approve regulations addressing these issues. Great Lakes customers should not be discriminated against.

#### COMMENTS OF LIBERAL MEMBERS

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** Today I seek clarification about comments made by Mr McGuinty in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale on Monday. During his visit to the Pearson Airport taxi and limo compounds, Mr McGuinty told many of my constituents in attendance that he favours compensation for those who have been economically affected by SARS. What I would like to know is, how much is he willing to provide for compensation for all those affected economically by SARS? When pressed by the media about a dollar amount, the Liberal leader did what he does best and avoided giving an answer.

I also find it interesting that Mr McGuinty suddenly took an interest in my scoopers bill only after it passed second reading.

The playing-both-sides strategy of the opposition could be seen later on the same day, when the member for St Paul's criticized Premier Eves for having other government caucus members and candidates at the police funding announcement in Toronto. Is the member for St Paul's aware that his own leader brought his Peel region candidates to his photo op at Pearson in my riding that morning? Is the member also aware that Mr McGuinty held a similar photo op at Peel Regional Police headquarters one month ago?

These Liberal inconsistencies are clear. My scoopers bill is substantive in getting results for my constituents while keeping the public safe. The Premier's police announcement is also substantive and provides results to Ontarians. The members for Ottawa South and St Paul's evidently don't share the substantive and results-oriented policies that define this side of the Legislature.

#### OLD FORT WILLIAM HISTORICAL PARK

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** On Easter Monday, a devastating flash flood hit Old Fort William Historical Park. The damage is extensive; the repairs will be costly. Nevertheless, the repairs must be made and must be made quickly.

For those who may be unaware, Old Fort William Historical Park is a reconstruction of the fur trading headquarters of the Northwest Fur Trading Co. Fort William was in every sense central to the history of this country. It was the site every year of the Great Rendezvous, when the company partners from Montreal and the wintering partners from the distant northwest came together to do the company business. It was of course the business of the fur trade that provided both the incentive and the resources to open up the country. The great explorers David Thompson, Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser were Northwest Co partners.

Fort William was our country's first great meeting place of east and west. From its earliest days it was a microcosm of the multicultural realities of our nation, with English-speaking, French-speaking and First Nations people all working together. All of these facets of what makes up the Canada of today are reflected in the annual celebration of the Great Rendezvous.

This is to be a particularly important season at Fort William, both economically and historically. It is a double-celebration year, celebrating 30 years since the reconstruction of the fort and, more importantly, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the first Great Rendezvous on this site. It is essential that the fort be restored in time for the special events of this summer to go ahead.

The staff at Old Fort William have been working non-stop to clean up, to save what's salvageable. I trust the government will do its crucial part, that this will be addressed as an emergency situation and that funds for repair will flow as quickly as possible.

#### NURSING WEEK

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I rise in the House in recognition of Nursing Week, May 12 to 18, to express my thanks to the hard-working members of the nursing profession. I'm referring to dedicated people like Kim Cearn, a constituent of my riding of Durham and political action officer of the RNAO chapter in Durham-Northumberland. She organized the Take Your MPP to Work Day in Durham. I'm pleased to inform the House that the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, has taken part in this program in the past two years by accompanying RNAO executive members Shirlee Sharkey, Adeline Falk-Rafael and Doris Grinspun on tours.

The dedicated men and women in nursing play a critical role in Ontario's battle against SARS. Throughout this emergency, nurses like those at Lakeridge Health in Durham demonstrated professionalism and compassion. The Ernie Eves government appreciates the sacrifices made by many in the nursing profession during this emergency, which is why we are providing compensation for lost wages because of SARS and quarantine.

We also recognize the crucial role nurses play in the delivery of health care in this province. This is why we are creating 12,000 new nursing positions. These nurses will provide high-quality care in hospitals, long-term-care facilities and doctors' offices. We are funding over 360 nurse practitioner positions to help provide primary care in underserved areas. I am a strong proponent of nurse practitioners and have been lobbying for full funding to be allocated for NPs in Scugog and Clarington in my riding.

In the recent throne speech, we announced our intention to provide free tuition for nursing students in underserved communities throughout the province. Despite investing more money in our health care system than ever before, the Ernie Eves team understands that it's really the dedicated men and women who work in the health care sector who make it all that it is today and all that we need for tomorrow.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** Within the last month MPPs on all sides of the House

have received thousands upon thousands of postcards signed by residents and their families of our long-term-care homes. What are they asking for? They say, "Ontario still funds the lowest level of long-term care of any of the 11 other jurisdictions in the government-funded level of service study."

"Ontario residents still get 45 minutes less care daily than residents in Saskatchewan got in 1999. This is simply not enough when: nine out of 10 require help to get dressed and eat; eight out of 10 require help to move around; and six out of 10 suffer from dementia and related disorders."

What has been the government's response? The "government's only commitment is that residents"—not the government but residents—"will pay \$2 more per day in 2003 and another \$2 in 2004."

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have a plan to make sure that those frail and elderly citizens are looked after in the way they surely need to be looked after. We will build a seniors' strategy that guarantees our seniors will be treated with dignity and respect. We will guarantee that during the first term of our mandate, the level of care that the residents will get will be at least that of the residents in Saskatchewan. We will make sure that our senior citizens are treated with dignity and respect.

1340

#### MEAT INSPECTORS

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** This Conservative government's gutting of our public service here in the province of Ontario continues to put increasing numbers of people at risk.

Meat inspectors are vital to food safety here in the province. They're a key part of Ontario's public service and they help our economy to flourish safely and responsibly. Yet we have fewer than 10 full-time meat inspectors in Ontario. Some 120 part-time contract meat inspectors, who have to pay their own travel expenses, who have to absorb their own travel time and rarely make adequate incomes on the basis of their part-time contract consulting meat inspection, constitute the balance. It's no wonder that there's a 32% turnover among these inspectors.

I tell you, that means that more and more inexperienced meat inspectors are being required to do invaluable meat inspection. That means that we are constantly being put at risk. That means that this government exposes us in yet one more fashion to serious public health risk.

This government should respond promptly and restore full-time meat inspectors as part of the public service, as members of the OPSEU bargaining unit, ensure that they are adequately trained, ensure that they are adequately paid, and ensure that the public of Ontario can count on its meat inspectors to ensure their—the public's—safety.



## SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** I rise in the House today to support the efforts of the Grey Bruce Eat and Learn program. Bev Gateman, program coordinator, along with numerous volunteers, ensures that every student who attends one of Hanover's four schools will have the opportunity to eat breakfast before going to class.

Grey Bruce Eat and Learn is a non-profit organization which is solely dedicated to supporting child nutrition programs in Grey and Bruce county schools. Research tells us that kids who eat well perform better in school. Breakfast programs help children get the nutrition they need to succeed.

Grey Bruce Eat and Learn builds on the strengths of community to help develop nutrition programs that are ideally suited to their specific needs. They presently support 55 child school nourishment programs, serving over 50,000 breakfasts, lunches and snacks every school year.

John and Cheryl Grant, owners of Grant's Independent Grocer in Hanover, were featured in the May 2003 issue of Canadian Living magazine. Since 2001, the Grants have donated over \$12,000 worth of food vouchers for the program. The money was generated through numerous fundraisers, including barbeques, golf tournaments and staff events. We are all grateful for their ongoing efforts.

Grey Bruce Eat and Learn doesn't just feed kids; it nourishes communities. I encourage everyone to get involved: students, parents, teachers, local businesses and everyone else who wishes to see our children well-nourished and successful.

I congratulate all the volunteers involved in this program, and the donors who contribute funds to help cover the cost of food.

## GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** This is a government that is out of steam, out of ideas, out for themselves and out for their friends. Their idea of an original idea is to have a budget at an auto parts plant. What insanity. Desperate for policies, what did Ernie Eves and the Tories do? They turned to Dalton McGuinty's plan and said, "Me too."

Ernie Eves saw Rick Bartolucci's bill to crack down on drunk drivers, and what did he say? He said, "Me too."

Ernie Eves looked at Mike Colle's bill on mandatory retirement, and what did he say? "Me too."

He saw Dalton McGuinty's plans for public school choice, for energy conservation, and for a seamless GTA transportation system, and what did Ernie Eves say? He said, "Me too."

The Harris-Eves government has had eight years to bring about these badly needed reforms, but instead they chose deliberately to go in precisely the opposite direc-

tion. Now, after eight years and on the eve of an election, desperately low in the polls, they have to turn to Dalton McGuinty for real ideas and for real change.

There is only one way to bring about change in this province. That is to call an election now, and for the people of Ontario to choose Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals to bring about real change for one and all in this province.

## COMMUNITY LIVING MISSISSAUGA

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** I am thrilled to advise this House that Community Living Mississauga, a non-profit organization supporting over 1,300 persons with an intellectual disability, has become the first organization of its kind in Mississauga to be awarded the highest level of accreditation from Accreditation Ontario.

Community Living Mississauga is one of just three organizations in Canada and 50 in the world to have received a three-year accreditation. Only organizations that provide superior service and undergo a rigorous, four-day assessment process achieve this award.

The residents of Mississauga are very proud of the outstanding volunteers, staff and supporters of Community Living Mississauga who have made this incredible achievement possible. While no one person is solely responsible for an organization's success, I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and hard work of Bonnie Yagar, the long-serving volunteer president of the board of directors, who has provided visionary leadership.

We also owe our deep gratitude to generous donors like Didi and Iggy Kaneff, who have held the annual Kaneff Charity Golf Tournament for 32 years to raise funds for Community Living Mississauga and Brampton.

I know that all members of this House join me in offering our heartfelt congratulations to the superb team at Community Living Mississauga. We wish you continuing success as you provide the exceptional services that enable persons with an intellectual disability to live life to its fullest—in the community.

## VISITORS

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome here today my son Joseph Di Cocco. By the way, he was a great hockey player. With him is Mimmo Comande. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature. We're all going to be on good behaviour so that we send off a great impression when they leave.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the first report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ON SCHOOL BUSES ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS DANS LES AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES

Mr Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en vue de protéger les enfants lorsqu'ils sont dans des autobus scolaires.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I've introduced a similar bill in this House six times. It has been supported by tens of thousands of people across Ontario, and particularly by those families who have had children who have died as a result of people passing school buses when the red lights are flashing. We need to pass this bill in order to have a strong deterrent and a conviction mechanism to protect the 810,000 children who ride 16,000 school buses in Ontario.

### INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES ACT, 2003

Mr Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill Pr19, An Act respecting the Institute for Christian Studies.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

1350

### SMART TRANSPORTATION ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 SUR UN SYSTÈME INTELLIGENT DE TRANSPORT

Mr Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to enhance public transit and provide for a smart transportation system in Ontario / Projet de

loi 25, Loi visant à rehausser la qualité du transport en commun et prévoir un système intelligent de transport en Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister for a short statement?

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation):** I'll defer till ministers' statements.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to increase the penalties for contraventions of the Act and regulations / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en vue d'augmenter les peines en cas d'infraction aux dispositions de la Loi et des règlements.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** This is the second time I'm going to introduce this bill. On April 28, many of us attended ceremonies remembering those killed or injured in the workplace in Ontario. Too many Ontarians are killed and injured every day simply for the reason of going to work. This bill would make violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act in Ontario the toughest in North America. It would raise the penalty, if an individual is convicted of a violation, to up to \$100,000 and up to two years in jail. For corporations, the fine would be increased to \$1 million. For directors of these corporations, the fine would increase to \$100,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. This bill would go a long way toward ending the carnage that occurs in the workplace every day across the province of Ontario.

### TRAFALGAR MORAINÉ PROTECTION ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA MORAINÉ DE TRAFALGAR

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to protect the Trafalgar Moraine / Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à protéger la moraine de Trafalgar.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** This is the second time I've introduced this bill. This bill would protect the lands in north Oakville known as the Trafalgar moraine from being developed and sold off to developers by the province of Ontario, and would ensure



that these sensitive environmental lands and this watershed are not given up for unbridled sprawl that will not only choke the air in the Oakville area but also eliminate the last stretch of green space in the western GTA.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

TRANSPORTATION

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation):** I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce a bill that, if passed, would advance our government's vision of a balanced and integrated transportation system in the province of Ontario. An Act to enhance public transit and provide for a smart transportation system in Ontario reflects our commitment to a transportation system that is convenient, that reduces travel time and that moves people and goods safely and efficiently. It also reflects our commitment to our Smart Growth objectives of a strong economy, strong communities and a clean and healthy environment.

We all know the importance of good, effective transportation to the continued strength and success of Ontario. Businesses must be able to get their products and services where they have to be, when they have to be there. Consumers count on fast delivery of merchandise they've ordered. Employees need to get to work on time. At the end of the day they also want to get home without delay to spend time with their friends and family. Yet every day, as we know, traffic congestion costs Ontarians many hours in lost time. It costs our economy an estimated \$2 billion, and unless we address this problem now, the unacceptable cost of gridlock will only escalate further in the future.

We as a province have to take action now to deal with this issue. Ontario is growing. New businesses and residents are coming to this province. The prosperity that we have in this province is attracting them; it's a result of the strong economic foundation and high quality of life that we have here.

Right now, the greater Toronto area is experiencing the second-fastest growth rate in North America. Ontario needs to plan for the growth in population in central Ontario by an estimated 3.5 million people over the next 30 years. While our government welcomes this growth, we also understand that it must be effectively managed. The smart transportation bill provides new tools to advance the transportation solutions that Ontarians will require in the years to come.

The proposed legislation recognizes that transit is a key to alleviating congestion. It builds on the advice provided by the Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel. As you're aware, this panel was set up last year under the leadership of Mississauga's Mayor Hazel McCallion. I'd like to commend Mayor McCallion for her efforts.

The panel was asked to advise our government on how best to manage both the economic and population growth that central Ontario will experience in the next 30 years. Following extensive consultation, it made strategic suggestions in key areas, including the development of an integrated transportation network. I'd like to join my colleague, Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister David Young, and all of my colleagues in government in thanking the panel for its hard work and significant contribution.

Last summer our government received an interim report from the panel with recommendations to reduce traffic gridlock in the short term. We responded quickly and announced immediate investments in transit services in Ontario, and today I'm pleased to announce that we're also moving forward quickly on longer-term recommendations from the panel's final report. If passed, the smart transportation bill would tackle congestion and plan for Ontario's future transportation needs in three fundamental areas.

First, it would amend the Ontario Planning and Development Act to allow the government to develop plans for future infrastructure corridors and to protect them from development. This is an important tool in the integration of land use and transportation planning, to support continued growth and to maintain options for the future. These corridors would be used for future highways, transit and utilities as well as municipal services. Our goal in this regard is a modern, safe and efficient transportation system that links Ontario's diverse cities and towns, relieves congestion and helps our regions to prosper further.

Second, the smart transportation bill would allow the creation of provincial agencies to coordinate the delivery of services such as a multi-system transit fare card. Our goal is to enable transit riders to travel quickly across several regions while transferring easily between different modes of transportation.

The bill would provide the legislative framework to help deliver short-term, common sense projects such as bus bypass shoulders, carpool lots and high-occupancy-vehicle lanes.

We must increase the capacity of the existing transportation system to encourage public transit use, alleviate congestion and help preserve and protect the environment for future generations.

1400

The smart transportation bill is one more step in our government's aggressive plan to develop a strong and efficient transportation system for the province of Ontario.

As you're aware, we have taken significant action to date to ensure a balanced and integrated system where both highways and transit play an important role.

So far the federal government has failed, unfortunately, to make a long-term commitment to fund transit. We welcome any federal transit investments, but what is really needed is a long-term transit investment by the federal government. We suggest that they match our

\$3.25 billion over 10 years to make it truly a partnership in commitment to transit investment in this province.

Meanwhile, our government has taken a lead role. We're planning ahead and we're taking the steps required for a system that is safe and efficient.

We're adding new lanes to provincial highways. We're making major improvements to highways and roads in our province.

We're investing in transit buses. We're investing in vehicle renewal, as well as in new GO Transit stations and parking facilities throughout the greater Toronto area.

Several new inter-regional transportation corridors are in the planning stage, each with an eye to multi-modal solutions, including highways, transit and rail.

An efficient, effective and integrated transportation system is absolutely crucial to Ontario's continued economic vitality. Our government understands its importance to Ontario's economic growth, to the creation of new jobs, to the continued prosperity of our towns and cities, and to the quality of life for all Ontarians.

We also know that the congestion we face every day has been up over decades and so it will take time to effectively manage. But manage we will. Our government is committed to addressing both our immediate and longer-term congestion and gridlock challenges.

The smart transportation bill is a key component in our strategy. We will continue to work hard to meet the transportation needs of the Golden Horseshoe area and all of Ontario, both now and in the future.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** It's been eight years in the making that we've had gridlock in this province, and the Harris-Eves government has done absolutely nothing about it. On the verge of an election and here we are today, another day, another election announcement by the Eves government.

But what's especially disappointing about today's announcement is that they're trying to claim real credit about action on gridlock in the greater Toronto area. But the reality is that they've got a half-baked plan, no real plan, and a few ideas that have been lifted from the Dalton McGuinty Growing Strong Communities platform.

I want to take a close look at the announcement that the minister made earlier today. It's an obvious attempt to steal the policies of Dalton McGuinty, announced months ago in our Growing Strong Communities plan. But even the government, even this Eves government, can't get it right. Instead of a seamless smart card system, they're making a commitment to a smart card system that might work starting at Union Station but not within any of the area of the city of Toronto. Where is the TTC as a part of their announcement? They don't understand that 95% of all public transit trips happen within the city of Toronto. Their announcement is hardly a triumph of good planning and the ability of government to deliver real relief from the problems facing our transit system.

Dalton McGuinty has promised the establishment of a greater Toronto transit authority, long desired by GTA

municipalities. But there's nothing on that here, of course. It seems that they're plowing money into a smart card system without a comprehensive plan for both growth and integration of these transit systems. It's very much like putting the cart before the horse. But we're getting used to seeing that from the government.

What I find most surprising is what's not a part of some of these announcements. How about the idea of making transit passes a non-taxable benefit? It's a great idea. It's Dalton McGuinty's idea. So if this government is looking for more ideas, why don't you try to steal that one?

How about a commitment to double the amount of parking for GO Transit stations? It's another great idea. It's Dalton McGuinty's idea. And I wouldn't be surprised to see the government try to lift that one as well.

How about dedicating two cents per litre of the provincial gas tax for transit funding? It's a great idea. You know municipalities want that; Hazel McCallion herself called for that. You know that transit in the GTA is unsustainable unless stable and significant funding from the province is provided. It's another great idea. It's Dalton McGuinty's idea. You can borrow that one as well to fill your empty plan.

Your government has spent eight years gutting public education in the province of Ontario, especially in the GTA. In 1998, then-Finance Minister Ernie Eves cancelled all funding for public transit. Now, amazingly enough, Premier Ernie Eves wants the public to believe that they've changed their minds. But the leopard can't change its spots. I think the people of Ontario know that they can get the real thing. The people of Ontario have a clear choice: they can vote for a pale pink imitation of the Ontario Liberal strong community plan or they can vote for the real deal: they can vote for Dalton McGuinty, a man with the plan, a man with the vision and the willingness to do whatever it takes to battle gridlock and win.

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** As a former chair of the Toronto Transit Commission, this idea of a smart card is, I think, about 15 years old. I remember that this was introduced 15 years ago. The Tories were in power even then, and since the Tories came to power all they've done is cut transit operating costs to zero. You give no provincial funding for the operating of transit. You're the only jurisdiction in the world that does that. What good is a smart card if you don't have any buses or service on the road? What good is this card if you can't catch a bus in Oakville, Vaughn or Brampton? You, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves have taken away all of the bus service, so now they're going to stand on the corner for a half-hour waiting with this card for no bus.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** It is always a pleasure to stand in this House and especially to commend my good friend and former colleague Mayor Hazel—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** We'll allow the member to start again, in fairness.



**Mr Prue:** Thank you very much, Speaker, for bringing some decorum to the House.

It is always a pleasure, of course, to commend my good friend and former colleague Mayor Hazel McCallion, because when Mayor Hazel McCallion speaks, it seems that members opposite start to listen. She has come full circle from a formerly suburban mayor to one who now recognizes the needs of a growing and expanding region. She has made some valuable recommendations which I am pleased that the members opposite are starting to listen to. There are some good recommendations in this report. Before I get to the bad ones, I want to say what the good ones are, because there are, of course, always some good recommendations contained in any bill.

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** I'll remember that.

**Mr Prue:** Yes, always.

What is in there that I think should be commended by members of all parties are the infrastructure corridors. This is a good idea to protect future citizens and future municipalities along the roads to make sure that the roads and railways can be built, and that other infrastructure that needs to be built can be brought to bear, without having to buy them back after they've been given away. It is a good idea for the bypass shoulders to allow buses and other vehicles that are transit-oriented to pass gridlock, as it surely will continue to develop. It is a good idea for the car lots, and I commend the minister for the idea for the car lots that are contained, and also for the HOV lanes, which are used everywhere in the city of Toronto and allow people on the transit and buses to have an opportunity to travel at least as fast as the private cars.

1410

It is the fifth provision with which we have difficulty. That is the provision for the multi-system transit fare card, because it goes around Toronto and not through Toronto, and that is the difficulty. It has been arranged, ignoring that 80% to 90% of the people who use the transit system in the GTA use it in Toronto. We have to question why this has happened. Why has it happened? Has Toronto walked away from the table? If so, why did they walk away from the table? Or were they not invited in the first place? The TTC has most of the transit riders; it has 90% of the vehicles. In fact, in the whole municipality of Peel there are fewer buses on the road than the yellow buses that the TTC has for repairs. There are fewer people being transferred on the bus in Mississauga than on any of the streetcar lines in Toronto. Quite frankly, this city has suffered. It receives virtually no subsidy from the province of Ontario. In all the world it is probably the only city that receives no subsidy, and for sure in North America it is the case.

I would tell you that what has been proposed here is a recipe for disaster. The gridlock, if it occurs, most assuredly will concentrate in the downtown core. We need to make sure the capital dollars are being spent in Toronto, I would say, even before it is spent in the areas outside of Toronto. Although we would welcome Peel,

Durham, York and Halton getting such monies, it cannot come at the expense of the people of the city of Toronto. It cannot come—and I can see this now: the transit authority that you're talking about, they're going to split the money. What is going to happen? Will Toronto get 50-50, when it has 80% to 90% of the transit riders? This is, as I said, a recipe for disaster.

There are other things that can be done and should be done. This government should be looking at a seamless pass throughout all of the GTA, including Toronto. They should be looking at monies that go and are apportioned to the municipalities throughout all of the GTA, especially in Toronto. The GO buses end up here; the GO trains end up here; the subway will end up here. The subway, if it ever extends beyond Steeles Avenue, will start at Union Station. If it ever extends beyond Scarborough Town Centre and beyond Etobicoke it will start at Yonge Street and needs to be included.

Although we welcome the minister taking the initiative at long last, he has left out the most important component. I would hope, before this bill is debated, that Toronto is brought into the picture and that Toronto can be included.

#### VISITOR

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that all members in the House would like to recognize my guest in the members' gallery, Mr Bill Furlong, who supported the Trillium Health Centre in a silent auction to have lunch with his member. He is a family person living in my riding, a very successful, dynamic young man of the future. I am very grateful that he supported a great cause and I appreciate his presence in the House today.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 7, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** We'll let them settle down first.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** It's a wonder I can hear any noes.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### WEST NILE VIRUS

**Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** I have a serious question for the Minister of Health. Minister, I have a string of e-mails that show how poorly you've handled the response to the West Nile virus in Ontario. In August 2001, when the first infected bird was found in Ontario, Dr Lo was assigned to create a test called the ELISA test, which is to detect West Nile. You remember

Dr Lo, because he's the one you fired when you fired the five scientists out of the public lab. According to these e-mails, Dr Lo was told the project was being put on hold in order to deal with something else. As we heard yesterday, the association of public health units acknowledged that there are not sufficient resources in public health to do their job. What Dr Lo said in one of his e-mails was, "Thank you for providing me the opportunity to work on this important public health problem of West Nile." Finally, of course, it never happened.

Can you explain to those affected by West Nile why you would have delayed the development of a test for West Nile as early as the summer of 2001 when you knew it had already arrived in Ontario?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** This is fiction. It is absolute fiction to say that the individuals in question were going to at one point fight West Nile virus, and at another point claim that they were in the forefront against bioterrorism and now that they're in the forefront of the fight against SARS. These people were not involved in research. These people were not medical biologists or microbiologists. They were doing inventory searches and library searches to build up their case. When we have eminent, world-class scientists in our teaching hospitals and in our universities who deserve support and do get our support in research, frankly, I think that's reprehensible.

**Ms Pupatello:** Let me suggest to the minister that this e-mail is from a medical microbiologist, virology immunodiagnostics, perinatal and vaccine preventable diseases, laboratories branch, Ontario Ministry of Health. This is what she said: "...I just wanted to confirm that we will be putting the project on hold"—that is, the development of ELISA for West Nile. "At this point there is no urgency to get the ELISA set up but hopefully we will be able to resume the project to have it ready in time for next West Nile season," which would have been last season. Last season we had 17 people die from West Nile disease; a thousand other people infected, but 17 actually lost their lives in this province.

What I am suggesting to you, Minister, is that you have shown a complete lack of leadership in the development of safety for the public on this file. You've had the proof and your specialist told you. You knew what to do. Their lack of funding meant they couldn't do their jobs. Today you stand in your place and you suggest for us—you apologize to the people for your lack of leadership—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I'm afraid the member's time is up.

**Hon Mr Clement:** I reiterate for this House and for the public that the individuals in question were not involved in research, that the individuals in question were not medical scientists or medical microbiologists. We do fund research. We fund research on a whole range of issues. They are called researchers and scientists, in our laboratories, teaching hospitals and universities. That is where our efforts have been.

When it comes to our own laboratories, we are putting the money where it counts, which is making sure we have

the tests in place to deal with the issues of public health that are important to Ontarians. That is our commitment, and we have in fact increased our funding year after year in that regard.

**Ms Pupatello:** Let me read you yet another e-mail from our medical microbiologist with your Ministry of Health. "We are in the process of setting up ELISA"—this is back in August 2001. "ELISAs can be tricky to set up and someone reminded me that Ching Lo has a lot of experience doing this. Would it be possible to borrow him for the next couple of months while we work through the kinks?"

Your own people knew he was the expert. Your own people knew they were going to use him to develop that test. A month and a half later, he was taken off the file because they had other priorities, even though they knew West Nile would be back the following season. They hoped it could be developed by the next season, but it never was. We went through the entire season last year fighting for results of tests that had to be sent as far away as Winnipeg.

Minister, that is a lack of leadership on your part. That is a lack of use of proper resources to fund public health. I insist that you stand in your place today and admit that you have bungled this badly. We have said so from the beginning. You have not shown the leadership required on the West Nile virus, and we have the proof in our hands to show it.

1420

**Hon Mr Clement:** Let me put some facts on the table. We currently have 129 staff with science degrees employed in our Ontario public health laboratories. Of these, 23 have post-graduate and graduate degrees, and we still have two who are medical microbiologists. We have them on staff right now. The individuals to whom she is referring were not researchers, were not medical microbiologists. They were not involved in research. They were not involved in the research that she suggests. They are not the people to whom she refers. The people to whom she refers were not involved in the activities that she has mentioned.

So from my perspective, we did invest in the right kind of researchers in the right places and ensure that our laboratories were concentrating on what they do best, which is testing the people of Ontario to ensure that the people of Ontario are safe from a public health perspective. That is our commitment, and it has been our commitment from day one.

#### ADAMS MINE

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane):** My question is to the Deputy Premier. A couple of weeks ago, I got wind of your government's scheme to quietly sell over 2,000 acres of crown land to the numbered company that now owns the Adams mine. I learned that you were about to sign the deal at bargain basement prices despite having never publicly marketed the property. After I called Minister Ouellette's office to



complain, he immediately put the sale on ice and promised a 60-day review.

Deputy Premier, today I've learned exactly who is behind the numbered company you wanted sell this land to. I now know who the new owners of the Adams mine land are. It's the Cortelluci group of companies. Minister, why were you planning to sell crown land to the largest donors to the PC Party without any public notice and at below market prices?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education):** First of all, I think the member needs to understand that there are various and many requests for crown land received on a daily basis and there is consideration given to many of them. I understand that the piece of property that the member is referring to, this particular piece of crown land, has been under review. I would also indicate to you that the minister is not here today, but certainly full details of that review are expected shortly.

**Mr Ramsay:** Deputy Premier, the Cortelluci group of companies has donated over \$1 million to the Ontario PC Party. In the leadership alone, they gave Ernie Eves \$44,600. In total, the five leadership candidates received over \$185,000, and you yourself received \$40,000 from them.

They now own the Adams mine. This crown land is important, because without it they cannot legally accept garbage at the Adams mine. If you sell them the land, they stand to make hundreds of millions of dollars.

Minister, do you really expect us to believe that it is just coincidence that the largest donor to the Ontario PC Party was involved in a secret deal to buy crown land at \$22 an acre?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think there are a lot of allegations that are being made, and I think it's important that we set the record straight.

According to the information that I have received from the Minister of Natural Resources, Jerry Ouellette, I have been assured that it underwent a full environmental assessment that was approved by the Ministry of the Environment in 1998. I also understand that it was the subject of an independent appraisal by an accredited land appraiser through the ORC.

I would repeat again to you that as far as this particular sale is concerned, I understand that full details of the review are going to be shared shortly by the Minister of Natural Resources.

**Mr Ramsay:** Deputy Premier, I have a letter sent to the Minister of Natural Resources by the vice-chief of the Timiskaming First Nation. He says your sale to the Cortelluccis "appears to contravene a number of fundamental principles upon which the sale of crown land is to be disposed of in the province of Ontario." He goes on to say, "The ministry has a legal obligation to consult with affected First Nations over the disposal of crown land."

Despite your ministry's rules and treaty rights, that consultation never happened. You weren't just planning to practically give this land away; you were literally bending over backwards for the PC Party's richest

donors, ignoring your government's own rules and trampling on treaty rights of our First Nations. It was all supposed to be done in secret.

Minister, why shouldn't I believe that the only reason your government tried rushing this deal through was because you wanted to help a friend before calling the election?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think it's really important that we take a look at all of the facts. As I said at the outset, I understand that the proposed sale of this particular crown land has been reviewed. I would just remind the member opposite that the full details of that review are expected to be released by the minister in the very near future.

## HYDRO DEREGULATION

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, today Alberta Premier Ralph Klein, your government's soulmate, your best political buddy, admitted that hydro deregulation isn't working in Alberta. He has admitted that they need to conduct an independent review because so many people are angry over soaring hydro rates.

You used to point to Alberta all the time; you used to say it was the promised land in terms of deregulation. Now, even Ralph Klein admits it's not working. Will you admit it's not working in Ontario either?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I have never compared Ontario to Alberta. In fact—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** I never have. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Ralph Klein, for his energy minister Murray Smith and for the government of Alberta.

We did have a chat in my office with my counterpart's office in Alberta, and I think the member's characterization of Mr Klein's comments is unfair and is wrong.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm only repeating what is reported in the press.

You and your illustrious predecessors, Mr Stockwell and Mr Wilson, used to refer to California as the promised land of deregulation, until the lights went out. Then you referred to Great Britain, until they had to reregulate and bail out some of the private companies—British Energy. Then you referred to Alberta. Now even Ralph says it's not working there.

Minister, when you have to inflict dirty diesel generators on people in Guelph, Kitchener, Burlington, Etobicoke, Toronto, London and Ottawa, it is clearly not working here either. Will you stop your dirty diesel generation scheme and admit none of this is working for Ontario consumers?

**Hon Mr Baird:** This may come as a great surprise to the leader of the third party: he shouldn't believe everything he reads in the newspaper.

*Interjection:* He blew his budget on his bus.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Or don't believe everything you hear coming out of a bus.

The facts on the issue which the member opposite comments on have been distorted, exaggerated, twisted. The facts are this: we can reduce our reliance on high-cost imported power by bringing clean-burning natural gas generators into the province. I think that would be good for the Ontario electricity supply and for people in the province of Ontario.

With respect to diesel generators, which could be used as standby generators only, as the RFP says, in what I would say are emergency circumstances—after all, we'll have 3,300 megawatts of new, clean electricity that we didn't have available last summer.

Let me be quite clear. Let's end his fearmongering and be quite clear. There will not be new diesel generators in any of the cities which he has spoken of.

1430

**Mr Hampton:** According to the Ontario Minister of Energy, the lights didn't go out in California and Ralph Klein didn't bring forward an independent review of deregulation in Alberta today.

But Minister, you're caught in your own contradictions. You say, and the Premier said yesterday, that you have—well, he said 2,500 megawatts of new power available this summer; now you say 3,300 megawatts of new power available. Minister, if you have this new power available, why do you need to inflict dirty diesel generators on people in Guelph, in London, in Kitchener, in Burlington, in Toronto and in Ottawa? And if you've got all this new, clean power available, why do you have to inflict these dirty diesel generators without even holding an Environmental Assessment Act hearing so that people can find out what it's all about and propose alternatives?

Minister, if you've got the new power, you shouldn't need these dirty diesel generators. If you've got the new hydro, you shouldn't need to force it on people without going through an environmental assessment hearing. Which is it? Which story are you trying to tell people today?

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The good news in Ontario is that we have 800 megawatts of new power, that wasn't available last summer, already up on-line at Bruce. We have 500 megawatts of power up on-line in Sarnia. We'll have 1,500 megawatts of new, clean generation coming out of the Bruce for the summer.

We saw just this week that the Canadian nuclear safety agency gave the go-ahead for the first reactor at Pickering to come on-line. That's 3,300 megawatts of new, clean electricity. The member opposite looks like he's almost disappointed.

To address very clearly his point, let the fearmongering end. There's not going to be diesel generators in Guelph, London, Kitchener, Toronto, Ottawa or Burlington. He may want to stand in his place and tell the House why, when he was in government, there were more than 500 new diesel generators that got environmental certificates of approval. Would he do that?

## WEST NILE VIRUS

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to ask the Minister of Health this question about West Nile.

Minister, you've tried to say—

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to give the leader of the third party unanimous consent for another sup on his first question.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

The member on the second question?

**Mr Hampton:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, you've tried to say to people across Ontario that you now take the West Nile virus seriously. But we find that you're only going to provide the public health units, who are already stretched, who are already having difficulty doing their job, with 50% of the money.

Now, we know, Minister, that West Nile affected far more people than you were willing to admit last summer; 17 died and over 400 became sick. Do you still believe that it is adequate protection for the people of Ontario from the West Nile virus to provide public health units with only 50% of the money they need to protect the people of Ontario?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Quite frankly, I think that there will have to be more done, that there will have to be more done across this province. For the health units that have already embarked upon larviciding, that is perfectly according to our seven-point action plan. We expect other medical officers of health to make the same decision to protect the public, and if they don't, we'll make it for them.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, you know, and I think the people out there across Ontario know, that if you're going to protect people, it's not sufficient to do what you did last summer. At the end of the summer, after more than 400 were infected and 17 people died, then you came forward with some funding—too little, too late.

The latest research published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal says that West Nile is far more serious than your government was willing to let on, far more serious than was first suspected. But here you are, hard-pressed health units, and you're only going to give them 50% of the money they need to do their job.

Minister, in your view, is that properly and adequately protecting the people of Ontario?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Firstly, the funding was always there, and it is there this year as well, and in fact it has been considerably enhanced.

Secondly, is the honourable member honestly trying to suggest that there is a Canadian Medical Association Journal that is accusing the provincial government of having knowledge, information and belief about West Nile virus in defiance of every leading scientist in the world and that we hid it from the public? If he is suggesting that, I suggest he say it straight out and then we can deal with that kind of allegation. The fact of the matter is



that we are all learning together. We all know how serious the problem is, and quite frankly, your flights of rhetorical flourish are not helpful.

### GOVERNMENT ASSETS

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** My question is to the Minister of Finance. Premier Eves plans to sell about \$2 billion worth of essential public assets to balance the books this year. We've seen this movie before. On May 5, 1999, the day the provincial election was called, the 407 was sold and the 407 users have been ripped off ever since. We are afraid that exactly the same thing is going to happen as you sell, once again, \$2 billion worth of assets to balance your books.

I want to know the answer to this question: what exactly are you planning to sell and what assurances can you give the public that they won't be ripped off like the 407 users have been ripped off?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance):** First of all, the honourable member's assertion is not correct. This government, as it always has, has put out its revenue and expenditure forecast every year. We will continue to meet the commitments we've made to the province of Ontario. For eight years we have been following an economic plan that has produced five balanced budgets, \$5 billion in debt repayment, over a million new jobs in this province and growth that is rivalling our trading partners. That's the plan that is right for Ontario; that is the economic plan we will continue to follow.

**Mr Phillips:** Listen, you haven't told anybody what you're selling. That's the problem. We got ripped off with the 407 deal, without question. You broke all your promises on that. We want to know what you're selling in this fire sale. The Dominion Bond Rating Service has said they're not even going to include that in their revenue estimates. The chief economist at TD bank said the assets have not been identified.

I want a very clear answer on this. You're expecting us to buy \$2 billion before the next election. The 407 users have been ripped off because of your promises last election. I want to know today how you are going to raise this \$2 billion and, specifically, the guarantees that you're going to protect the people who are using those assets you're selling off. Give me the answer and give the public the answer to those two questions, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** First of all, we've been very clear that every year we review the public assets we manage on behalf on taxpayers. We review them to make sure that taxpayers are getting the best value for them and that they're being managed in the best way possible. We will continue to do that. For example, last year we reviewed Hydro One. It is to remain in public hands as the Premier has made very clear. However, for the Province of Ontario Savings Office, it made much more economic sense for taxpayers, and consumer sense, to divest ourselves and get out of the banking business. Every year we did that; every year will continue to do that.

The honourable member likes to quote the Dominion Bond Rating Service, which actually, if he reads the press release very closely, has some very positive things to say about the strength of the Ontario economy, about the Common Sense Revolution strategy as being the right one for economic growth. On the other hand, maybe he would like to remember the March 18, 1988, DBRS press release talking about the Liberal government's budget where they put it on a rating alert with downward implications.

1440

### UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, there was great news last week for Ontario students, especially those graduating from secondary schools this spring. On Friday, Ontario universities confirmed for our government that there would be enough spaces to accommodate the double cohort, and I want to congratulate you for great leadership and confidence in our colleges and universities.

Many of my constituents have already received their offers of admission from universities and are looking forward to a high quality educational experience next year. I'm also pleased that many will have the opportunity to study close to home at Ontario's newest university, the Ontario Institute of Technology in my riding of Durham. Ministers Flaherty and Ecker will enjoy that as well.

Can you tell the House how many spaces have been created in Ontario's universities, and what this means for students planning to go on to post-secondary education this September?

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues):** Thank you to my colleague from Durham.

Yes, it is a fact. Last Friday was a day of some celebration for the colleges and the universities, but on that day especially the universities. It is a time that the students are receiving their offers, and the presidents of all of the universities across the province confirmed that there would in fact be 70,000 quality spaces in our universities to accept these young people next September. That of course was our goal, and we have been working together for a number of years.

I was quite pleased to hear Dr Mordechai Rozanski, the chair of the Council of Ontario Universities, say it best: "The government is ensuring that the resources are available to continue to accommodate all willing and qualified students. The province's universities, in turn, are delivering the increased spaces. To do this, given the dramatic increase in numbers, is an extraordinary achievement."

**Mr O'Toole:** It is indeed an extraordinary achievement, and I want to repeat what you've been saying from

the beginning: every willing and qualified student would have a place. Thank you for that.

Locally, Gary Polonsky, who is the president of Durham College, has been assuring my constituents with a personal guarantee that they would have a place. Many times he's mentioned that it's thanks to the \$24-million expansion fund that our government has provided. It's important to note that the unprecedented expansion of our colleges and universities will yield benefits for years to come with new faculty, new student spaces and student aid put in place, not just for the double cohort but for future generations.

But I am still troubled with the Liberal-like naysayers who are now raising concerns with the incoming classes and the issue of quality. We now have these students and we have the spaces. That's been confirmed. What steps is the government taking to ensure that students—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** The member's time is up. Minister?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** It's true that our government has funded an unprecedented expansion of our universities and colleges, one that has not been seen since the late 1960s or early 1970s in this province. That's the right thing to do, because young people are choosing post-secondary education right across this country more than ever before, and it will continue on.

The question of quality is one that we are all supportive of, quality which signifies and, I think, labels our colleges and universities as second to none in Canada and in North America. We did create, over and above buildings, research, student aid, increased operating, a quality assurance fund.

Once again, I'd like to quote the Council of Ontario Universities, as they express confidence: "The government's historic SuperBuild program has enabled universities to make significant improvements to the quality of the physical facilities, just as the new quality assurance fund will enable them to hire more professors—"

**The Speaker:** I'm afraid the minister's time is up. New question.

#### DON JAIL

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. I had the opportunity yesterday to visit the Don Jail. Let me tell you that the conditions are nothing to write home about. Notwithstanding the exemplary job that the administration, particularly the correctional officers, do to make their bad situation a little better, inmates are being given three for one for time served in the Toronto jail. As a result, dangerous people are being let out on to the street after a far shorter period of time. These offenders are spending less time behind bars. That's not tough on crime, Minister.

Correctional officers cannot do their jobs properly when the staffing levels are not up to the required complement. Right now they are 18 COs short at the Don. You have major health and safety complaints

regarding working conditions of your employees. I would ask that you stop blaming the judiciary and the federal government for the conditions of the Don Jail, and fix it.

Minister, will you commit today to building the regional detention centre that Toronto needs to house those inmates?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security):** The member opposite is keeping the well-entrenched Liberal tradition of putting prisoners' rights ahead of everyone else's rights. If the Liberals had their way, we would see golf courses, riding stables, pool tables and video games, like we saw during the bad old Liberal days of 1985 to 1990. The reality is that this government has committed close to half a billion dollars for infrastructure renewal in our system. We have unprecedented pressures, there's no question about that, but we are addressing them, unlike the Liberal Party, who released an election platform a month ago without one reference to the correctional system.

**Mr Levac:** I want to make this perfectly clear: this minister made it very clear that he does not care about his correctional officers in his jails. The working conditions are putting your members in jeopardy. They have health and safety issues that you're not resolving. They have been attacked more than in any other place in the province of Ontario. You are not protecting your employees. That's the issue.

You have not corrected the situation at the Don Jail. Since 1996 it's been overcrowded. In the year 2000 and all the way through, you're 40% over capacity, jeopardizing the safety of your correctional officers and the administrative staff.

Stand in your place and say you've got a plan to build that regional detention centre in the area of Toronto that needs it, to keep those employees safe and to keep those prisoners in jail, where they belong.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** This is a member who talks about law and order and clearly aspires to be a justice minister in a future government. Yesterday his staff called the Don Jail and said that he would like to tour the jail with two staff. He showed up with a reporter from the Toronto Star. As the critic—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Mr Speaker, please. As the critic—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I think I should have a right to respond to this, Mr Speaker. This is very important.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Come to order, in fairness to the minister. It was your side yelling as well. It was both sides.

**Interjection:** No.

**The Speaker:** It was so. Both sides were yelling, and you were chanting, as a matter of fact. So, to be fair, the minister does need to have some quiet. He has it now.

Minister, continue, please.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** The member should know that for operational reasons of security and privacy, without a security clearance we do not allow reporters to tour our



correctional facilities. This member has abused his privileges as a member by deceiving the correctional staff of the Don Jail. It was a fraud perpetrated on the staff of the correctional system of this province by the member opposite, who says that he believes in law and order, believes in the maintenance of the law, and wants to be a minister of justice in this province. It is beyond belief that he engaged in this kind of activity.

**Mr Levac:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: To set the record straight, I was reading from the standing orders under "Rules of Debate, matters out of order in debate:

"23. In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:

"(h) Makes allegations against another member....

"(j) Charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood."

I would ask that the minister withdraw those comments.

**The Speaker:** There isn't a point of order. New question.

1450

#### RURAL EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** My question is for the Minister of Education. In my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, over the past four years one high school has been closed by the Grand Erie District School Board and four other high schools have been threatened with closure, the latest being Delhi District Secondary School. The schools that have been targeted are efficient, effective, high-quality schools that just happen to be in small towns. These schools are essentially the hub of the community. The bottom line is that local high schools, in addition to their educational function, are vital to the well-being and survival of the rural communities on so many levels: social, economic and cultural. What is our government doing to deal with issues of rural and small schools, and the special circumstances, like increased costs, that such schools face?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education):** I do appreciate the question. Certainly, the issue of small, remote and northern schools is such that we, as a government, have always recognized that they have very special and unique needs. That's why when we introduced the student-focused funding, we introduced a special grant, the geographic circumstance grant. I'm very pleased to say that that grant has increased since 1998 by more than \$64 million, or 45%, to \$207 million in 2003-04. Moreover, in recognition of the fact that these small schools don't always operate at 100% capacity, we have what's called a top-up fund. This, again, is for schools in remote, rural and northern Ontario. I'm very pleased to say that for this year, 2003-04, it is going to be available to the tune of \$157 million to help these schools in ridings such as Mr Barrett's.

**Mr Barrett:** The issue of high school closures is obviously a large concern of mine. I will mention a

sincere concern for those MPPs who sit on rural caucus. I can't speak for the Liberals; they don't seem to have a plan for small schools. One of the problems in my riding, and in many others, is that schools threatened with closure are indeed rural, however they are part of an urban school board and in some cases the rural schools do not qualify for rural or remote funding. What is being done to fix this issue?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I recognize the unique needs that individuals such as Mr Barrett have in their ridings, when you do have these small, rural schools within an urban community. In response to Dr Rozanski's recommendations, we are making available \$50 million in order to flow that money to small, rural and northern schools. We have asked Dr Downey, a well-renowned individual, former university president, co-chair of New Brunswick's Commission on Excellence in Education, to take a look at how we can best flow the money to those rural and northern schools in single communities. We recognize there are additional costs; we're going to support those schools. I can tell you that we are already providing a 200% increase in the declining enrolment grant, which is going to help boards this year, and we're going to make sure—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

#### SOFTWOOD LUMBER

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** In the absence of the Minister of Natural Resources, I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. We've had a chance to review the cave-in that your government is scheming with respect to the US softwood lumber barons. Not only will it kill jobs in sawmills in northern and central Ontario, but it will also negatively affect the pulp and paper industry. Pulp and paper mills that are already struggling because your scheme of hydro privatization has substantially increased their costs of power now also face the prospect of having to pay much more for their timber supply. Hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs in forest industry communities are being put at risk by your government.

Minister, before you cave in to the US lumber barons, before you go any further down this road, will you hold public hearings in forest industry communities that will be affected by this cave-in?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** For a government that's created over one million net new jobs, the member's question is nonsensical. Why would we do anything to jeopardize jobs in northern Ontario when our track record for the last eight years—unlike the loss of 10,000 jobs after five years when he was in office. When he was on the cabinet benches representing northern Ontario, after five years there were net 10,000 fewer jobs. We've created 1.1 million more jobs and we're doing nothing on the softwood lumber issue except to protect and enhance jobs in the province of Ontario.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, you know the US lumber baron position. You know that position, when it's gone before international tribunals, has never held up. Yet your government, as we speak, is down in Washington, in a back room, secretly negotiating to give up control over our crown forests. You'd think that you would at least hold public hearings. But it seems the best that people can do—if they want to talk to the Minister of Natural Resources about this, forest industry companies today in Thunder Bay have to pay \$2,000 to the Conservative Party in order to get 15 minutes of the Minister of Natural Resources's time.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** That's a shakedown.

**Mr Hampton:** It's a shakedown. You refuse to hold public hearings, but if companies that are going to be affected, companies that may have to lay off workers, want to talk to the Minister of Natural Resources today in Thunder Bay, they have to pay \$2,000 for 15 minutes of his time. Is that what you call looking after the jobs and the interests of northern Ontario communities, that you have to pay \$2,000 just to get 15 minutes of the minister's time?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** For this honourable member there is a conspiracy under every log.

No government has consulted with northerners more than we have, particularly in the last year. My colleague Janet Ecker lead discussions, along with many of our other colleagues and myself, on pre-budget consultations, throne speech consultations. Constantly our members are in the north, constantly we're talking to those companies involved with softwood lumber, forestry and the lumber industry. We are having discussions, but in no way in those discussions are we jeopardizing jobs. Why would we? Your question doesn't make any sense coming from an MPP from northern Ontario. It's just the craziest question I think I've heard you ask yet. How would anyone advocate a loss of jobs when that has not been the track record of this government in the past and it certainly won't be in the future?

#### GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, last year David Tilson stepped aside to give Ernie Eves a safe seat in this Legislature, and at that time Ernie Eves emphatically promised that there would be no patronage appointment for Mr Tilson. He said, "I don't know why everybody assumes that somebody will get something for doing what they consider to be the right thing." Well, Mr Tilson sure got something. Last month our party discovered that Mr Tilson had been secretly appointed to a \$111,000-a-year job at the Ontario Municipal Board. He joins 53 other past Tory candidates in an Eves trough of Tory patronage appointments. Ernie Eves is out for his friends on his way out the door. Minister, why did Ernie Eves break his promise and add Mr Tilson to the Eves trough of Tory patronage?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education):** Perhaps the member opposite would like to take a look at how the appointments and reappointments have been made by our government since 1995. Of the reappointments, approximately 37% of them were of people initially appointed by the NDP and the Liberals. If we take a look at the former MPPs appointed by Premier Eves, we have Frank Miclash, former Liberal; Len Wood, former NDP; Marion Boyd, former NDP; Ross McClellan, former NDP; Murray Elston, Liberal MPP; Bob Rae, Hydro One, former Premier; Bernard Grand-maître, former Liberal, member of the Assessment Review Board; David Peterson, former Liberal Premier, University of Toronto governing council. How ridiculous. Obviously, you are going to appoint the best person for every job.

1500

**Mr Smitherman:** Well, madam Deputy Premier, I've got something for you. It's a number, and the number is 53; 53 past Tory MPPs or candidates appointed. Just this morning at the patronage meeting here at the Legislature Linda Franklin received her call to the trough. She was an EA to Ernie Eves and a strategist in his leadership campaign.

But Mr Tilson's case stands out as the worst of Tory patronage. There was no press release on David Tilson's appointment, so your pride notwithstanding, madam minister, was missing. Had his appointment been for just one day longer, Mr Tilson would have been forced to appear before the scrutiny of a legislative committee. But your government instead purposely kept the appointment quiet to disguise the fact that the Premier was breaking his promise.

Deputy Premier, if your government thinks that David Tilson was such a good appointment, why did you keep it so quiet when it happened and why did you make his appointment only for one year so there was no legislative scrutiny?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** To be fair, Mr Tilson is eminently qualified to be the vice-chair of the Ontario Municipal Board. He is a lawyer. He has been involved in municipal politics. But, you know, if you want to go further, we have always believed in appointing the best person to each job. Let's go back to your time. Did you ever appoint Liberals? Here's who you appointed when you were in office: Claudette Miller, Liberal candidate, member of the Ontario Municipal Board; Jim Breithaupt, chairman of the Commercial Registration Appeal Tribunal and chairman, Ontario Law Reform Commission; Patti Starr—now, she wasn't an MPP; she was a Liberal fundraiser—she was appointed to Ontario Place board of directors and Metro Toronto Housing Authority; Jane Scott—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I'm afraid the time is up, Minister.



## HYDRO GENERATION

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, we've all heard a great deal of concern expressed about the province's electricity supply. People are particularly interested in cleaner sources of energy being used to meet the province's needs. Minister, I wonder if you can tell me what the government is doing to ensure that we have a supply of energy or a supply of electricity from cleaner, alternative sources?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** In this regard I say to my colleague from Scarborough Centre that we need to have more electricity in the province of Ontario, and those of us on this side of the House want that to be clean or green power. We're satisfied that we've done a lot. We're satisfied that we have come a long way, but we believe much more work remains to be done. We're pleased that there will be more than 1,500 megawatts of new electricity coming on the grid from the great riding of Helen Johns in Bruce. We're pleased that the first commercial wind farm in Ontario opened, again, in the great riding of my colleague Helen Johns, the member for Bruce. We're pleased that 500 megawatts of new power from natural gas came on-line in Sarnia. We're pleased that 800 megawatts that wasn't available last summer will be up and running. We're pleased that more non-emission power will come on-line with enhancements at other facilities, that Pickering A got approval for the guaranteed shutdown lifted. That clears the way for 500 megawatts of new power.

We believe we can do a lot more, and we will.

**Ms Mushinski:** Thank you for that response, Minister. Clearly, this government is taking steps to promote the construction of new generation projects from clean and alternative sources. In fact, as you know, I have a good friend in Kempenfelt Bay who is a farmer and has invested thousands of dollars of his own money to invest in turbine power.

Minister, I need to know if these incentives are working. I need to know that there will be a new supply from these sources for Ontarians to rely on. I'm wondering if you could assure the people watching today that the incentives will be working.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We did announce in the great community of Niagara Falls with my colleague Bart Maves a number of incentives for clean generation and green generation. They include a 10-year corporate tax holiday, a 10-year property tax holiday and an immediate 100% corporate income tax write-off, in addition to a capital tax exemption and a retail sales tax rebate because we don't want to tax clean and green power.

My colleague Steve Gilchrist, the Commissioner of Alternative Energy, has been working hard on a renewable portfolio standard. We did also see some \$200 million of water generation in the province, as well as through the budget the Minister of Finance extended that tax treatment to cogeneration.

I would still like to know why Howard Hampton hasn't stood in his place and explained to this House why he and his government signed not one, not two, but 500 diesel-powered generators when he was in office. I wish he would stand in his place and tell the House that.

## FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** The question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, your government makes claims that you're good fiscal managers. How do you explain the fact then that your Cabinet Office costs have more than doubled since 1995, last year you spent \$662 million in consulting fees, and since 1995 you have increased the provincial debt by 23%? That means that each and every day Ontarians pay about \$5 million more in interest because of that increase. You have spent over \$250 million on partisan advertising. You have allowed billions of dollars in corporate taxes to go uncollected. There is at least \$125 million of uncollected fines under the Provincial Offences Act. According to chief economist—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I'm afraid the member's time is up.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance):** Actually, I like the first sentence in the member's question much better. She said that we claim to be good fiscal managers. Yes, we do, but it's not just us who says that. That may not be grammatically correct.

Why don't I quote somebody else the Liberals like to quote: DBRS? "The Common Sense Revolution, whose principles were set out in 1995, has allowed the province to strengthen its financial profile markedly while providing substantial tax relief to individuals and corporations."

Or perhaps she would prefer this quote: "Strengthened fiscal discipline and strong economic growth have led to notable improvements in the province's financial flexibility and debt-to-GDP ratio."

Yes, we may claim that, but so do others. The record: five balanced budgets, \$5 billion in debt repayment, over a million new jobs—

**The Speaker:** The minister's time is up.

1510

**Ms Di Cocco:** The minister obviously doesn't want to answer the points I've raised.

Minister, I'd like you to know what the people in my riding have reaped because of your mismanagement. We have doctor shortages; we have school closures; we have inadequate hospital facilities. We do not have enough beds to meet the needs of our community, according to our physicians. We do not have enough nurses and health care professionals to manage the patients. We have 45 severely handicapped people in crisis, nowhere to go, and we have children's mental health programs being cut. Of course, we have our lax environmental rules such that Ontario is the only place on this continent that allows landfilling and incinerating of untreated waste. These are the results of your fiscal mismanagement.

Minister, how do you explain those situations when you have been governing since 1995 during the best economic era in this province?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Let me take another quote she might be interested in about the Liberal government record. When the DBRS came out in 1988, it talked about their "high rate of expenditure through the peak of an economic cycle." It put their rating alert on a downward implication, gave them a rating alert on a downward implication.

They racked up the debt by 33%. We have paid down the debt by \$5 billion, as we promised. Do you know what? The tax-and-spend Liberals and the tax-and-spend NDP left the voters, left the taxpayers in this province with a legacy of \$1 million more an hour of debt being added to our children's and our grandchildren's future. They were part of that. We have—

**The Speaker:** I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

## TRANSPORTATION

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Transportation. We have heard today that the opposition parties only care about public transit if it's in Toronto. But I'm almost certain that our smart transportation plan can't possibly be ignoring Toronto, can it?

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation):** I'm pleased to have an opportunity to clarify some of the misinformation that was thrown about this place earlier today. The fact of the matter is that not only are we not ignoring Toronto—

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The minister used the term "misinformation." I seek your guidance as to whether or not—it was used in the context of information that was provided on the floor of the House. I wonder if that is a parliamentary term.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I think as he talked he didn't accuse any member. He said "misinformation"; he didn't say who. He was talking about it. I appreciate that clarification.

The Minister of Transportation.

**Hon Mr Klees:** As I was saying, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify that not only are we not ignoring Toronto, but we are very much working with them. In fact, with regard to the smart transportation system and the smart card we were discussing, one of the priorities will be Union Station and other key connections with the TTC to ensure that people who are using transit across the GTA will effectively connect in an efficient, effective and seamless way with the TTC.

Having said that, let me say to the member for Don Valley East that the next time he has a family conference, he may want to speak to a certain federal member and bring them to the table with some \$3.25 billion of transit funding so that the TTC can be supported the way it should be by both levels of government.

**Ms Mushinski:** Thank you for that response, Minister. I think you've mentioned some great initiatives for transit in Toronto.

There are some members here today, especially across the way, who said that you've put the cart before the horse. I know that this is probably a fitting quip for the Liberals, since they have 18th-century vision for transportation, but could you please tell us, in the days of engines and automobiles, what is so important about the fare card that makes it a priority in our transit vision for this century.

**Hon Mr Klees:** I'm pleased to respond to that question as well. The fact of the matter is that the member who posed this question knows full well that it takes convenience for riders to be encouraged. In fact, the TTC issued a plan that talks about how we encourage people to use the TTC. One way you do it is to make it convenient to use the TTC. With regard to the suggestion that the province doesn't support the TTC, let me remind honourable members that this government supported the TTC to the tune of \$113 million in 2003; another \$126 million in 2002; we have just transferred \$64 million to the city to reimburse money invested in the TTC for safety improvements; and let's not forget the \$879 million that this province committed to the Sheppard subway, all under the TTC.

So there is nothing about this government ignoring the TTC. We're saying let's work together in the best interests of the commuting public in this province.

**The Speaker:** Before we do petitions, the member for Burlington has a point of order.

## VISITORS

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** I'm sure that all members of the House would like to know that in the House today are some special guests, not only the page from Burlington, Matthew Fabbicino, but also his mother, Catherine, his father, Luigi, and his beautiful sister, Briana. Please welcome them to the Legislature.

## PETITIONS

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** "Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% ... effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and ...

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and ...



"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service of Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; ...

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned" 1,250 individuals "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that" the Ernie Eves government reduce the "15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities...."

I'm in full agreement and have affixed my signature hereto.

### OHIP SERVICES

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition that has been sent to me by the Canadian Hearing Society from Kingston and reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government's decision to delist hearing aid evaluation and re-evaluation from OHIP coverage will lead to untreated hearing loss; and

"Whereas these restrictions will cut off access to diagnostic hearing tests, especially in geographic regions of the province already experiencing difficulties due to shortages of specialty physicians; and

"Whereas OHIP will no longer cover the cost of miscellaneous therapeutic procedures, including physical therapy and therapeutic exercise; and

"Whereas services no longer covered by OHIP may include thermal therapy, ultrasound therapy, hydrotherapy, massage therapy, electrotherapy, magnetotherapy, nerve therapy stimulation and biofeedback; and

"Whereas one of the few publicly covered alternatives includes hospital outpatient clinics where waiting lists for such services are up to six months long; and

"Whereas delisting these services will have a detrimental effect on the health of all Ontarians, especially seniors, children, hearing-impaired people and industrial workers; and

"Whereas the government has already delisted \$100 million worth of OHIP services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately restore OHIP coverage for these delisted services."

I agree with the petitioners.

1520

### GOLF COURSE ASSESSMENT

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I have a number of signatures on a petition collected this spring at various golf courses across my riding. It's titled, "Help Keep Green Fees at a Reasonable Price." People were asking for a review of the method the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, MPAC, has chosen to un-

fairly increase golf course assessments, and it is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) has chosen an assessment process for golf courses not relative to property assessment, that increases golf course property taxes unfairly;

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year's levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented, or a reclassification of golf course properties can be made."

I have worked with a number of these golf courses. I hereby affix my signature to this petition.

### ALUMINUM SMELTER

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** This is a petition to clean up the abandoned aluminum smelter in Georgina township.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding the Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads into the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

"The Ministry of the Environment should immediately conduct a full environmental assessment and cleanup of the site."

This is petitioned by the people who have signed this particular petition to the Legislative Assembly. I affix my signature; I'm in complete agreement.

### PROTECTION OF TEMAGAMI

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** This petition is from a University of Guelph club, the Guelph Forest Defence collective. There are over 250 signatures on it. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas conservation reserves are a critical part of Ontario's protected area network; and

"Whereas 97% of Ontarians polled want the Temagami area protected; and

"Whereas the MOE is currently investigating the MNR and its past track record of allowing illegal massive clear-cuts throughout Ontario; and

"Whereas the MNR must hold the needs of the environment and the wishes of the Ontario public before those of industry; and

"Whereas the world's largest remaining intact red and white pine old-growth forests exist in Temagami and are threatened by logging in block 30 and block 46; and

"Whereas any further damage from logging around these old-growth stands could be irreversible;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) A cancellation be placed on any present or planned logging in block 30 and block 46 of the Temagami wilderness;

"(2) The government of Ontario set up well-defined interconnected protection zones around old-growth stands in Temagami;

"(3) The government of Ontario guarantee that those protection zones would be off limits to logging and other industrial operations; and

"(4) The government of Ontario support the community sustainable forestry initiative of the Bear Island First Nations and the town of Temagami."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I fully support it.

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** I have a petition here. As a matter of fact, I have a petition with a few thousand names collected from students of Toronto, Ontario, with respect to high tuition fees, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels, and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

I will present this to the House and I will affix my signature to it.

#### NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition that has been sent to me by people who live in Oshawa. It reads as follows:

"Whereas one in five children in Ontario live in poverty;

"Whereas, as part of the national child tax benefit program, the federal government gives a supplement to low-income families across the country to begin to address child poverty;

"Whereas that money, up to approximately \$100 a month per child, is meant to give our poorest and most vulnerable children a better chance in life;

"Whereas in Ontario the Conservative government deducts the child benefit supplement dollar for dollar from those living on social assistance;

"Whereas this is leaving our province's neediest children without the extra money they desperately need to begin to climb out of poverty;

"Whereas all children are entitled to a fair chance at life;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, call on the provincial government of Ontario to stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement and ensure this federal money reaches all low-income families in Ontario."

I have signed my name to this petition. I agree with the petitioners entirely.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."



I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

#### MEDICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** This petition has been sent to us by Dr Jerry Halik, from the Markham-Stouffville health centre. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the OHIP schedule of benefits is often unclear about its definitions of good medical practice, causing problems for patients and their physicians;

"Whereas the medical review committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons has been aggressively clawing back payments to hard-working, conscientious doctors, thereby exacerbating physician shortages in the province;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to suspend further reviews by the medical review committee pending a negotiated agreement of an unambiguous schedule of benefits with representatives of affected practising physicians."

I agree with the petitioners and I sign my name to this.

#### GOLF COURSE ASSESSMENT

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** I want to recognize the hard work that my colleague Toby Barrett, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, is doing with regard to helping keep green fees at a reasonable rate on golf courses of the province of Ontario. I have a petition that reads as follows. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

"Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) has chosen an assessment process for golf courses not relative to property assessment that increases golf course property taxes unfairly," and I must point out this is an issue the government is dealing with and working on,

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year's levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented, or a reclassification of golf course properties can be made."

This is signed by hundreds of people.

1530

#### SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I've received tens of thousands of signatures in regard to this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is the licence plate number required, but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill ... An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex, be immediately enacted...."

This bill "imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing;...

"And we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

People have signed this from Aylmer, Ottawa and Nepean, among other areas of the province. I too have signed the petition.

#### CHILD CARE

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** "Whereas 70% of Ontario women with children under age 12 are in the paid workforce;

"Whereas high-quality, safe, affordable child care is critical to them and their families;

"Whereas the Early Years Study done for the Conservative government by Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain concluded quality child care enhances early childhood development;

"Whereas this government has cut funding for regulated child care instead of supporting Ontario families by investing in early learning and care;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario government adopt the NDP's \$10-a-day child care plan and begin implementation by reducing full child care fees to \$10 a day for children aged two to five currently enrolled in regulated child care by providing capital funds to expand existing child care centres and build new ones, by funding pay equity for staff, and by creating new \$10-a-day child care spaces in the province."

I agree with this petition and I sign my signature to it.

#### VISITORS

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** I know it's highly out of order, but Matthew Fabbicino is a page, as you know, from Burlington. His mom and dad and his sister are in the visitors' gallery and I'm sure the people of Burlington and Matthew would appreciate us saying hello today.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 6, 2003, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** We left off when the member for Trinity-Spadina had the floor. Our rules are that we go in rotation. Ordinarily I would look to my right. I think I have a point of order. The chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On Monday, May 5, 2003, there is a Hansard indicating Mr Bisson rising, effectively on a point of order: "Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down Mr Hampton's lead till Wednesday." ... "Wednesday. Is it agreed? Agreed."

I put to you therefore that it is appropriate for the New Democratic Party's one-hour lead to commence. I can indicate to you that Mr Hampton will be sharing that lead with Ms Martel from Nickel Belt.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the consent motion was for Mr Hampton to have his leadoff speech on Wednesday; I agree. But by the rules of the House, rotation goes. If Mr Hampton gets to do his speech right now, then the rotation would be that the NDP would have more speakers than the other parties. That was never agreed to. So when the rotation comes, Mr Hampton can have his leadoff speech on Wednesday.

**Mr Kormos:** This is rather cute pettifoggery. We have a long-time history here of deferring leadoff speeches. In the context of response to the throne speech, we know that the government has the first day, and upon the completion of their speaking to it, the House is adjourned without any further business being called. The leader of the official opposition then follows the next day. There had been an agreement—and we appreciate the co-operation, of course—for Mr Hampton to have his leadoff deferred to today. It's not out of line with other agreements and similar wording that has been done in years and in Parliaments gone by. Clearly, the agreement was as to Mr Hampton having his response to the throne speech today. It has been indicated that he will share that with Ms Martel. Ms Martel will speak briefly until Mr Hampton gets here. Mr Hampton has been delayed for a few minutes outside because of the scrum that follows question period.

I find it most regrettable that there are members here who would want to exploit the opportunity to deny what was clearly the intent of the agreement, and that was that Hampton have his leadoff today. What does that mean—that if Hampton doesn't get the floor until later today he's not to have his whole period for leadoff?

**The Deputy Speaker:** As I understand it, there are two questions. One is whether or not there could be a substitution of time. The debater right now would ordinarily be to my right. It seems to me you're asking for a separate question. You're asking for substitution when that opportunity comes. I'm not sure that should come at this point. It would seem to me that should come in the next rotation of your party. Other than that, there may be a different unanimous consent that you're seeking.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Welcome to the House, Mr Hampton. My dilemma is, in the absence of Mr Marchese, I'm looking to my right for a debater.

**Mr Kormos:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With due respect, we know there is a protocol that follows the reading of the throne speech. The protocol is that the throne speech is read and the House then adjourns for the day. The first bill of the session is introduced, as occurred last Wednesday. Thursday, of course, is the first day following the throne speech. The government then speaks to the throne speech, as Mr Gill and one of his colleagues did, and I was present during that. The House is then adjourned, notwithstanding that it's not 6 o'clock, to the next day.

On the next day, the leader of the official opposition, or his delegate, takes the floor at the beginning of orders of the day and commences his response. On Monday, there had been unanimous consent sought because Tuesday was an opposition day. So it was impossible for Mr Hampton to speak to the throne speech on Tuesday.

I'll be quite candid with you. Clearly, the motive for seeking the agreement was so that Mr Hampton could, as did Conservative government members and as did Mr McGuinty, address the House during the afternoon session rather than in the darkness, if you will, of the evening session. Unanimous consent was sought to stand down Mr Hampton's lead until Wednesday. Today is Wednesday. There was agreement with respect to that. "Is it agreed? Agreed." Mr Hampton is here to commence his lead. This is the tradition in the House, quite frankly, I suspect, as a convention, and I would ask that the Speaker give effect to the unanimous consent that was agreed to on Monday, May 5, 2003.

1540

**The Deputy Speaker:** I shan't do that. What I will do is, if you have a request for a point of order that you want to ask the House for unanimous consent for something, please ask it. Other than that, I am going to proceed in debate in rotation according to the custom of the House.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Point of order.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Excuse me, if I am taking more points of order on the same subject, then I will take them in rotation.

**Mr Bisson:** My leader has gone through the details, but I was the one that moved the point of order on Monday night. I was very clear, very explicit. There was an agreement by the Liberals and the Conservatives that



our leader would do his leadoff speech on the throne speech on Wednesday. It reads as follows: "I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down Mr Hampton's lead till Wednesday." I couldn't be any more clear. It was an agreement and it is agreed to on Hansard, so therefore I am waiting for Mr Hampton to do his lead. That's what the agreement was.

I notice there's a little bit of a meeting going on here. Can I suggest maybe we just take a five-minute recess in order to work this out?

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will wait while the business of the House goes on, as I think it should.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I seek consent to allow Mr Hampton to do his leadoff speech for one hour and for the remaining time of the throne speech debate to be shared between the Liberals and the Conservatives.

I will amend that. I will take the rest of the time and split it by rotation that it would normally have between the three parties. So nobody loses any time on either side of this House.

**Mr Kormos:** I appreciate the proposition and I want to indicate that we agree in response to the point of order and the proposition made by Mr Stockwell that we will calculate the impact of New Democrats having spoken and adjust it that so that it will reflect what in fact would have been the proper allocation of time, had the leadoff been in order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** So that things are well understood, Mr Kormos rose on a point of order and asked for unanimous consent for the leadoff. He has also added a whole lot of other things that I'm not even going to contemplate at this time. But on his point of order, on his request for unanimous consent, is there consensus? Agreed? It is agreed.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I am pleased to take part in this throne speech debate, and let me begin by saying that the amendment to the motion be amended by striking out all the words after, "Whereas Ontarians" and substitute the following:

"Have felt the impact of bad Conservative privatization policies where it hurts—in the pocketbook;

"Whereas the Conservatives ignore evidence from around the world that privatization of public necessities—such as water, hydro, health, education—doesn't work and costs more;

"Whereas Ontarians are looking for practical solutions that would:

"Stop hydro privatization and deregulation and ensure clean, reliable public power at cost.

"Extend public home care, create 100 new community health centres and cut long-term-care user fees. Cancel plans for private MRI/CT clinics and privately built hospitals and put funds back into public health care.

"Keep our drinking water public and protect water from source to tap.

"Ensure every student has the opportunity to excel, guaranteed by a dedicated education excellence fund that takes the politics out of education funding. No public funds for private schools.

"Immediately increase the minimum wage to \$8 an hour, prohibit scabs and treat injured workers fairly.

"Freeze rents for two years, build at least 32,000 units of affordable housing and increase shelter allowances.

"Cut tuition by 10% and ensure that no student is denied a quality education or training for financial reasons.

"Lower transit fares, shorten waits and reduce gridlock with a dedicated transportation trust fund.

"Reduce child care fees to \$10 a day for 18-month to five-year-olds in non-profit, regulated child care, and create 20,000 new child care spaces.

"Protect your pension from inflation and let you take it with you from job to job.

"Therefore, this House endorses an agenda of public power."

**The Deputy Speaker:** Mr Hampton has moved an amendment to the amendment of the throne speech. I'd like to read it if I could have a copy of it.

Mr Hampton has moved—

**Mr Kormos:** Dispense, please.

**The Deputy Speaker:** As I was saying before, if there are two of us up, if there are two of us talking, one of us is out of order, and it's not me.

Mr Hampton has moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by striking out the words after "Whereas Ontarians" and substitute the following—

**Mr Kormos:** Dispense, please.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Dispense? Agreed. Debate?

**Mr Hampton:** I believe anyone who watched the Conservative throne speech came away with the impression that this is a government that is either suffering from amnesia itself or wants the citizens of Ontario to suffer from amnesia in respect of the last eight years. This is a government that wants the people of Ontario to forget that it is the government that cut hospital budgets, it is the government that laid off 10,000 nurses and referred to nurses as out-of-date Hula Hoop workers.

This is a government that, according to their own education task force—Dr Rozanski—took \$2 billion out of our elementary and secondary classrooms.

This is a government that substantially cut funding for our public universities and colleges such that Ontario now ranks second to last in Canada in terms of per capita funding for our colleges and universities.

This is a government that wants people to forget that it downloaded the responsibilities and costs of protecting public health, protecting people from the SARS virus or the West Nile virus, or protecting people from drinking water that is not safe and healthy. This is the government that downloaded all of those costs and responsibilities on to municipalities.

1550

Anyone who read the throne speech would have to come away with the overwhelming impression that this is a government that wants to pretend that through one throne speech, somehow magically all of that damage

that has been done by this government over eight years can be reversed like that, with a snap of the fingers.

We like to think of throne speeches as setting a vision or a strategy or a direction for the future. But I challenge anyone: read this throne speech and try to find a vision for Ontario, try to find a direction, try to find anything that is coherent in terms of setting out a framework for Ontario. It is not there; it is simply not there.

I want to use the time that is available to me to set out what New Democrats believe must be the framework for Ontario, the direction ahead. Let me begin with an issue that touches virtually every person, every business, every industry in this province, and that is the fact that all of us need an affordable supply, a reliable supply of electricity, of electrical energy, and we need to have it in such a way that is environmentally responsible.

This is a government that has said that the energy policy for the province should be simply to privatize our hydroelectricity system, turn it over to private corporations and then let them do whatever they want with it, despite the failures in California; despite the now even recognized failures in Alberta, as we found out from the Premier of Alberta today, Ralph Klein; despite the failures in Great Britain; despite the failures in New Zealand; despite the fact that people in Montana and Nevada, in the state elections in the United States in November, voted overwhelmingly to reject deregulation of their hydroelectricity systems. Notwithstanding that, the direction of this government in terms of energy policy is simply, "Let the private sector do it."

Well, that is not good enough, because after eight years of hearing this government say, "Let the private sector do it," the sorry result is this: hydro rates have skyrocketed to the point that the government has had to bring in temporary rate caps, at least for residential customers, to try to hide the financial pain from them. But hydro rates have skyrocketed. For many industries in this province it's resulting in layoffs, it's resulting in curtailed production and, in some cases, companies literally saying, "We may be going out of business."

Environmentally, it has resulted in dirtier and dirtier air. Why? First of all, because the private sector is not building any new supply, therefore the existing coal plants we have in the province have been used more and more at levels approaching 100% operation. In other words, they are running virtually full out. When that is not enough to provide us with all of the hydroelectricity we need, then the government, through its minions, imports hydroelectricity from places like Michigan, Ohio and Indiana where overwhelmingly that hydroelectricity is produced by burning dirty coal. So the experience for people on the environmental side has been breathing dirtier and dirtier air.

Now, most recently, in order to try to cover up the severe failure of the private sector to build new supply, the Minister of Energy comes forward with a strategy to start utilizing dirty diesel generation in residential neighbourhoods in Toronto, Burlington, Kitchener, Guelph, London and Ottawa.

Clearly, this has been a failure. It's been a failure financially, in terms of the skyrocketing hydro bills and in terms of the amount of debt that has mounted because the government is trying to cover up some of the damage; it's been a failure in terms of the refusal of the private sector to build new supply; and it's been a failure in terms of the environmental damage.

I want to say to people all across Ontario that Ontario should learn from the experience in Great Britain, New Zealand, California, Alberta, Nevada and Montana. We must keep our hydroelectricity system in public hands and operate it on a not-for-profit basis, and we must implement a thoroughgoing energy efficiency strategy now in this province.

Finally, we should be adopting some of the measures that have most recently been taken by Hydro-Québec, a not-for-profit publicly owned utility, and by Manitoba Hydro in that province, where both of them have completed geographic analyses of their provinces. They now know where you can generate wind energy most cost-effectively and most efficiently. They are at least eight years ahead of Ontario now in moving to set up sustainable systems of wind turbines to generate clean, renewable electricity in that fashion. We must do this now, and the most cost-effective, most efficient and fairest way to do this is through a publicly owned, not-for-profit hydroelectricity system.

I also want to refer to some of the other measures I believe need to be taken. What we have seen from this government is also a reliance upon or a movement to rely upon the private sector to provide clean, safe drinking water as well. The experiment, though, with privatization of water already has gone very badly in this province, and we need only remember Walkerton.

This is the government that downloaded the responsibility for the provision of safe, clean drinking water almost totally on to municipalities and then eliminated the public labs for the testing of drinking water, put that over to private corporations. We saw very quickly, within a matter of about three years, how negatively that has affected people in Walkerton and potentially could have affected far more people in this province. Several people died, thousands of people were rendered ill, and many of those will be chronically ill for the rest of their lives.

I don't think the people of Ontario need a more severe lesson on how important it is to maintain safe, clean drinking water as a public service which is democratically accountable to the people, which is affordably and reliably provided to the people, yet this government has not heeded those warnings and continues to go down that road of privatization.

I want people across Ontario to understand. New Democrats are committed to public control over safe, clean drinking water, democratic control over it and we're committed to providing the necessary finances to ensure that municipalities and the province together can provide safe, clean drinking water to the people of Ontario.



Then there's the issue of what we see happening in our health care system. The throne speech was, shall we say, enlightening on that issue as well, because when it comes to health care, whether it be hospitals, whether it be the provision of magnetic resonance imaging or CAT scan imaging or whether it be the provision of home care for seniors, the strategy of this government is not to continue to develop the public medicare system. No, the declared strategy of this government is private hospitals, private MRIs, private CAT scans and private, for-profit control and delivery of home care and, more and more, the concentration of long-term care in private, for-profit deliveries as well.

What we know already from the evidence here in Ontario is that the privatization of health care—a piece here, a piece there, all of it being done through the back door—is in fact costing the citizens of Ontario more and delivering less.

1600

Let us take home care for a minute. We have seen home care being taken out of the hands of not-for-profit agencies like the VON and the Red Cross and turned over to, in many cases, American corporations like Olsten—who, by the way, have a terrible record in the United States. They have been charged criminally and civilly for fraud, criminally and civilly for misappropriation of funds, and criminally and civilly for mistreatment of patients.

Notwithstanding the evidence in the United States, this government continues to move away from public, non-profit providers of home care to profit-driven, corporate providers. What has been the result for people? We know that in the last two years some 122 seniors have been cut off the availability, have been cut off in terms of being able to receive proper home care. What happens when seniors who need home care can't get it? We know what happens. If they can't stay in their own home, then they must go into an institution. So the government is literally, by enforcing these kinds of contractions and ensuring that more of the money for home care in fact goes to the profit line and to the executive salaries, then forcing seniors and the disabled into hospitals and into nursing homes, and the health care bill goes up. That has been the experience.

On private hospitals, no less a right-wing journal than the Economist, upon reviewing the strategy of the governments of Margaret Thatcher and then John Major to move to privately funded and privately managed hospitals in Great Britain, has said that it's a complete failure. The Economist, a major right-wing organ of opinion, has said they are a complete failure. There is no benefit whatsoever in pursuing private development, private ownership or private management of hospitals. Yet we see this government continue in that direction.

We need only look to the United States to see how devastating this is. I think people across Ontario need to look to what is happening in the United States. There are 42 million Americans who have no health insurance—none. There are over 50 million Americans who believe

they have health insurance, but when they read the limitation clauses, the exemption clauses and the exception clauses in the so-called health insurance contract, they discover that they do not have much of anything. Virtually 100 million Americans, who all need health care, all need health insurance, simply don't have it. Yet the United States spends over 50% more than we do on health care. So how can anyone describe a scheme where you spend 50% more, yet a third of your population is essentially left out, as in any way a cost-effective or efficient way of providing health care for your citizens? Yet that is exactly the direction that this government is pursuing.

New Democrats want to be very clear with people across Ontario. We will stop now—not down the road—any move toward private hospitals, whether it be in Brampton or whether it be in Ottawa, or anywhere else in the province. Where we should be investing in health care is through the public medicare system, at the hospital level, at the public health level, at the long-term-care level, at the home care level. It is the most cost-effective way, the most efficient way and the fairest way to provide the health care that all of our citizens need in this province. New Democrats are committed to that.

As I said earlier, the government's own education task force chair, Dr Rozanski, after touring the province, after meeting with boards of education from one end to the other, after consulting even with some of the government backbenchers, after consulting with teachers and parents, after consulting with trustees, simply and in a quite straightforward way said that, not including what it would take to settle collective agreements, the government had underfunded our elementary and secondary schools by \$1.8 billion. When you include the cost of settling collective agreements in the current year, the total, all-in figure is over \$2 billion. That is how much this government has cut from our schools. This is a serious problem. In a world which more and more has become a knowledge economy and a knowledge society, the most important investment we can make for our people is in their education, to ensure that all of our people have the tools, the knowledge, the analytical and communication skills to participate in the economy and in society. Yet this is a government that has cut over \$2 billion.

I know the government has made a lot of announcements about education, and they've said that in the future they will fund education. But I say to people that if a government has spent most of the last eight years in cutting educational funding, do you now really trust that next year, the year after and the year after that they are going to make the investments in education? And I say this to my Liberal colleagues, because they as well are not prepared to put the money in now. The New Democrats want to be very clear: we must implement Rozanski now—not three years from now, not four from now; we must make the investment in our elementary and secondary schools now, and New Democrats are committed to that.

I want to outline how we would do it, because it's very important. First of all we must establish a dedicated education excellence fund. We would immediately put \$2 billion into the education excellence fund. How would we raise that money? That's important. The Conservatives don't want to talk about how they would find the money and the Liberals certainly don't want to talk about how they would do it. First of all, for individuals who have higher incomes, we would immediately implement a 3% increase on incomes over \$100,000 a year. So if an individual has an income of \$110,000 a year, the \$10,000 over the \$100,000 would be subjected to a further 3% income tax. That would generate for us at least \$1.5 billion in new funding, which would go directly into the education excellence fund.

I want people to clearly understand what their choices are here. The Conservatives are saying that if you want your children to receive a better, well-resourced and well-funded education, you should think about sending your children to a private school. Increasingly, we especially see this in the greater Toronto area. Public schools no longer have full-time principals; many of them no longer have sufficient maintenance and custodial staff to keep the schools clean on an ongoing basis; many of them do not have a full-time librarian; and they do not have music, drama and art teachers or full-time physical education teachers. So parents looking for a good program in the arts and in music, a good literacy program or good extracurricular programs in the schools simply can't find them. And they're increasingly being told by this government, "Well, take your child to a private school."

Here's the equation: to take children to a private school would very likely cost at least \$9,000 a year. The New Democrats are saying that the most cost-effective, efficient and fair way to provide education for our children is to reinvest in the public school system. I would rather pay an additional 3% on that \$10,000 of income over \$100,000 than pay \$9,000 or \$10,000 per child to a private school. I think that investment makes sense for all of us across Ontario. The best way, the fairest way, the most cost-effective way to invest in our children's education is for all of us to contribute to the public education system.

1610

This brings me now to the private school tax credit. This is a government that, for years going forward now, wants to take about \$500 million of public money and turn it over to private schools. New Democrats want everyone to understand this clearly: that is wrong. Public money should not be used to finance private education. If I as a parent do not want to use the public swimming pool in my community and I want to build a private swimming pool, that's a private decision. I should pay for it privately. I shouldn't be asking for a tax credit, and heaven knows I should never get a tax credit. If as a private citizen I do not want to use the public transportation system and I want to purchase a private car, that is a private decision. I don't ask for a tax credit and I

should never receive a tax credit. Likewise for education: if you want your children to attend a private school, that is a private decision. Don't come asking for public funding. The New Democrats would restore that money to public schools. That, combined with other additions to the education excellence fund, would allow us to make the \$2-billion reinvestment in our public elementary and secondary schools this year, when it's needed; this year, when we're already seeing the pain of further cuts, further closures and further loss of existing education programs.

I want to talk just for a moment about universities. We have seen college and university tuition fees escalate through the roof, such that we now have thousands, if not ten of thousands, of young people and adults who can no longer afford to access a post-secondary education. Clearly, in a knowledge economy and in a knowledge society this is wrong. The New Democrats are committed to reducing tuition fees by 10% and ensuring that student financial assistance is available to all students in this province who need financial assistance in order to acquire a post-secondary education. It's not enough just to freeze tuition fees. We certainly cannot allow tuition fees to continue to increase. We must cut tuition fees, and New Democrats are committed to doing that by 10% immediately so that education at the post-secondary level once again becomes affordable and available to all of our citizens, not just those who have thick wallets.

I want to speak just for a minute about minimum wage. That is also part of what we believe needs to be the public agenda, the agenda of Public Power. We have seen over the last eight and a half years the Conservative government freeze the minimum wage at \$6.85 an hour. When you factor in inflation, it means that the lowest-paid workers in this province have lost virtually 20% of their income through inflation. This is a government that wants us to believe that the more than 300,000 people who work for minimum wage are all high school students. That's what this government would have us believe: "They're high school students. It's really just pocket money, convenience money." That is a complete myth. The majority of people who work for minimum wage are in fact women: women who are trying to put food on the table, pay the rent and put clothing on the backs of their children; women who in many cases are working not one minimum-wage job but two or three minimum-wage jobs—one during the day, one in the evening and another on the weekends—trying to make ends meet.

We've seen in the United States over the last three years of the 1990s that the federal government increased the US minimum wage by over 40%. What they found, in doing that—and the US minimum wage, when you factor in currency exchange, has been at \$8 an hour or thereabouts for some time. What they did, though, in implementing these changes was a number of studies, and what did they find? Right-wingers like this government would tell you, "Oh, if you increase the minimum wage, it will result in a loss of jobs." They did a number



of studies and found that there was no loss of jobs whatsoever. In fact, they found that by increasing the minimum wage, those lower-paid workers had more disposable income, but those workers in turn very quickly used that income in the local community to purchase, as I said, rent, food, clothing and other necessities. Besides benefiting lower-paid workers, it stimulated a great deal of economic activity for local small businesses. In fact, the people who benefited second were local small businesses because, increasingly, they saw people coming into their stores, their shops and their restaurants with a little more disposable income to make more purchases. That was the overwhelming result as confirmed by studies in the United States.

It stands to reason that someone who works for the minimum wage is not going to take their \$1-an-hour or \$1.50-an-hour increase and go on a vacation in Florida. They can't afford it. They're not going to go out and buy an expensive foreign car. They can't afford it. They're not going to salt the money away into an RRSP or an investment plan somewhere. They can't afford it. They spend almost all of their increase in income in the local community and they do it almost immediately, and that generates a lot more economic activity and benefits small business in the community to a great extent. That's why New Democrats say it is time now, after freezing the minimum wage for eight and a half years, to increase the minimum wage to \$8 an hour.

I say to my Liberal colleagues, who say they would increase it to \$8 an hour by the year 2007, that that would in fact result in a lower minimum wage than we have today, because when you further factor in inflation of about 2%, it substantially reduces people's incomes even more. So freezing it, as the Conservatives would do, is not the answer. Holding off an increase to \$8 an hour until 2007 is not an answer. People who work for the minimum wage need to have it increased to \$8 an hour now. It would benefit them and it would benefit the local economy.

Then we come to the issue of rent. This is also another public agenda that is very important, with this government's crippling of rent controls and with this government's refusal to build or participate in any way in the construction of new affordable housing. We have seen, not just in our major cities like Toronto, Ottawa or Hamilton, but in virtually all urban areas now in the province, a substantial escalation in rents for one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments such that we literally have an affordable housing crisis in not just the large cities but in many smaller cities like Guelph or Peterborough or other cities like that.

This can't continue. If we want people to participate in the economy, if we want them to be available for work, if we want them to be available for training, if we want them to be available for education, then as a starting point, as an absolute necessity as a starting point, people have to have a secure roof over their head. I defy any of the Conservative members to try to organize their life for work, for training, for education or for anything else if

you don't have a roof over your head, if you don't have a permanent address, if you don't have a phone where you can call your employer or call potential employers. But across this province, we are seeing more people who cannot, do not, have affordable housing, or we're seeing all kinds of families that are one paycheque away or one rent bill away from losing the housing they have now, and that is simply not proper. That is not, by anyone's measure, acceptable justice, an acceptable accommodation in our society.

New Democrats are committed to not only ensuring that there is affordable housing and supportive housing for the homeless, but ensuring that we have an ongoing affordable housing strategy for all those people across Ontario who deserve to have government support and government participation in looking after this necessity of life.

I want to outline very clearly that what we need to have is, first, a two-year rent freeze. Rents are already too high. We cannot afford to see them escalate any further. Rents must be frozen for at least a period of two years.

Following that, we need the re-creation of real rent control in this province so that people can be sure that they will not be gouged with excessive increases in the future. Then we need the province, with municipalities and, yes, the Liberals in Ottawa, to recreate a partnership for the construction of affordable housing across this province, not-for-profit housing so that the housing which private developers will not build will in fact be built publicly through a public partnership which looks after this most important necessity.

New Democrats are committed to that. It makes good financial sense.

**1620**

I want to talk about the issue of child care. If you go out into the city of Toronto or you go to any city, any town, and many rural areas in this province and you talk to younger parents and you ask them, "What is the thing which you worry about or you're concerned about the most?" what they will overwhelmingly tell you is, "The availability of affordable, reliable, safe, regulated child care." This is a government that says, "We want everyone to work. We want everyone to participate in the economy." But if you have young children and you want to participate in the economy, this issue of child care must be looked after.

The province of Quebec, immediately to the east of us, a number of years ago implemented a strategy of providing affordable, reliable, safe, regulated child care for working families in that province. In Quebec, they provide regulated child care for \$5 a day. We recognize in Ontario, given that there have been no investments in child care in this province for the last eight years, we could not do the \$5-a-day child care. But we've done the numbers and we can certainly afford to implement \$10-a-day child care across this province so that parents will know that their children are being properly looked after in a good environment, in a positive environment, where

they are safe and where it is affordable in a regulated regime.

In addition, we are committed to providing 20,000 new child care spaces—20,000 new child care spaces—in the first four years so that those parents who are waiting in line now for child care will finally have access to affordable, reliable, regulated child care.

There are a number of other issues I want to deal with. I want to mention pensions. We see from the throne speech that the government thinks the answer to people's retirement, the answer to people having secure incomes as they wish to leave the workforce, is to simply do away with the retirement age and force people to work longer and harder for less. This government's image seems to be having people working into their 70s.

The real issue out there is—and it doesn't matter where you are in Ontario—people want to retire earlier. Most people, if they could, would like to retire before 65, at age 60; if possible, at age 59 or 58. In fact, I remember the Conservatives amending the RRSP rules governing members of the Legislature so some of them could tap their pension plans at age 55. It seems that the Conservative members of the Legislature want their pensions set up so they can tap into them at age 55, but for other people in the world they want to bring in legislation which postpones retirement to past 65.

Pushing people to work longer and harder in life for less is not the answer. The answer is to reform Ontario's pension legislation to ensure that vesting happens earlier. The first day you go to work is the day your pension should vest, to ensure that when people have to move from one employer to another their pension travels with them—pension portability—and finally, to ensure that we start to create some inflation protection for people's pensions.

I know the Conservatives and, yes, the Liberals will say, "Oh, you can't do that." Other provinces are doing it now. Quebec vests pensions on day one. There is full portability for pensions in Quebec from day one, and a number of other jurisdictions have begun to move toward inflation protection or at least partial inflation protection for people's pensions. That is what the agenda should be, not setting up the tables so that people are forced to work into their late 60s and early 70s.

Put in place decent pension legislation so that more people can have multi-employer pension plans and those multi-employer pension plans can be protected by the insurance fund; more people can have vesting, portability and inflation protection. That's the agenda people want to see, not working longer and harder for less. It is that pension reform that New Democrats are committed to—now more than ever.

Conservatives and Liberals will say, "Oh, New Democrats can't do this." They will say, "This can't be done." Well, I have set out very clearly in our plan how we would pay for the Public Power agenda. I said very clearly that from 1993 until 2000, corporations in this province were making very healthy profits. They had no trouble paying their corporate taxes and then having very

healthy profits beyond that. So we would restore corporate taxes to the level they were at between 1993 and 2000. That would provide us with a substantial amount of money to be able to implement some of the progressive, positive Public Power reforms that I've outlined here today.

We actually took our plan and submitted it to an independent economist. I would recommend that Liberals do the same and I would recommend that Conservatives do the same. The independent economist came back to us and said, "Given the positive and progressive tax changes that you're prepared to make, given the priorities that you've set out, your program is certainly affordable. It will result in balanced budgets. In fact, in some years it will actually result in modest surpluses."

The only way the Conservatives' so-called budget plan makes sense is if they sell Hydro One again this year, though they don't want to admit that it's Hydro One; they just admit that there's a \$2-billion hole in their budget. It's the same \$2-billion hole they had last year. Last year they proposed selling off Hydro One. They know that is a very unpopular idea out there with the public, so they just don't want to admit that it's Hydro One. But it's very clear when you read the fine print that there's a \$2-billion hole in their budget and the only way they would find that money would be to sell off Hydro One.

I had a chance to watch the Liberal leader on Focus Ontario when he was confronted by Mr Graham Richardson, who said, "You know, your numbers don't add up," and the Liberal leader, Mr McGuinty, said, "Yeah, we're a few billion off." So I challenge the Liberals: take your so-called plan and submit it to an independent financial analysis, an independent economic analysis, and then come clean with the people of Ontario. Don't pretend that you can reinvest in health care, reinvest in education, reinvest in protecting the environment, yet maintain all of those corporate tax cuts and all of those individual tax cuts that the Conservatives implemented, up to and including the year 2001. It cannot be done. That's why the Conservatives have a \$2-billion hole in their budget and why the Liberals are at least \$3 billion off as well.

Let me just conclude by saying this: I spend a lot of time going to small communities, large communities, rural communities and First Nation communities in this province. The overwhelming message I hear, no matter where you go in this province—you can even hear this message on Bay Street—is that it is time to start re-investing in the things which matter most in people's day-to-day lives. Everyone in this province recognizes that we must provide health care for our citizens. It's not a choice; it's not a frill; it is just a reality of life that we must provide health care for our citizens. Everyone recognizes that we must provide a good level of education for our children; that safe, clean drinking water is important; that protecting the environment is important; that, especially in cities, having a good system of



public transit is important. All of these things are unavoidable.

1630

The agenda that the Conservatives have mapped out is to say, "Oh, we'll cut your taxes and you can buy these things privately." But the experience of hydro privatization is this—what's the difference between public non-profit electricity and private profit-driven electricity? The difference is, when you privatize, the hydro bill doubles. That is equally true of health care and it's equally true of education, and it's equally true of a number of other services that we must have in our life.

The reality is that for many of these essential services, the most cost-effective way, the most efficient way, the fairest way to provide these services for our people, to ensure that they're available, is to do it through a public, not-for-profit system where we all make a modest contribution through our taxes but what we get individually and what we get together as a society in terms of quality of service is far greater than the modest contribution that we're called upon to make.

New Democrats have fought for that principle for a number of years. We continue to fight for that principle and we are dedicated to implementing that principle now and in the future in this province. That is the vision that this province deserves, that is the vision and direction that this province needs now, and New Democrats are pleased and proud to be able to put it before the people of Ontario.

I say to the Conservatives and I say to the Liberals, let's call the election. Let's have people make their choice. Let people make their decision.

And I say to people across Ontario, your vote is your say. If you want a private world where you pay more and get less, the Conservatives will certainly deliver it and they'll deliver it quickly. The Liberals will certainly deliver it as well; they'll just be a little slower about it.

New Democrats are committed to those essential public services that we all need, and we're committed to providing them publicly in a not-for-profit way which is affordable and reliable for all of us.

Call the election. Let's let the people of Ontario have their say.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Funny how things seem like they were at this place a while ago.

Further debate?

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** It gives me great pleasure to stand up and speak on the throne speech debate. I will say this about our previous speaker, the leader of the third party: Mr Hampton, if nothing else, is consistent and very clear about his policy, unlike the people across the aisle.

I would like to say that this throne speech sets a very clear direction for this province. This throne speech is a follow-up to the budget that clearly outlined what this government is in the process of doing in committing the funds that are required for the proper, good and conscientious management of the taxpayers' dollars in this province.

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member talks about a budget. I haven't seen a budget in the House. Can he please elaborate what he is talking about?

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Spina:** There was a budget speech delivered, and furthermore it was tabled with the Clerk's office when this House resumed, and therefore it is an official document as of last week. Furthermore, there are bills that will be introduced regarding the various tax measures and commitments that were made by this government, some of which I would like to elaborate upon. Furthermore, I would like to say what they were, in particular when they affect my constituents of Brampton.

There were 17 tax cuts for seniors, businesses and wage earners. Most particularly, what we had was a tax cut that was committed to for seniors who have paid for many years in support of the education system and who said, "We need a break." We heard these people. We listened. We chose to give them a break on the taxes they pay toward the education system. These retired people, on fixed income in particular, are the ones who are going to benefit from this tax break. The issue here is, they have contributed to education for so many years and they now deserve a break.

We will be introducing legislation to allow seniors to retire at the time of their choosing. The leader of the third party indicated that he felt it was unfair to force people to work beyond the age of 65. The reality is that I've had constituents, as I'm sure you have, who have come to me and said, "You know what? I want to work. I'm able to work for an extra couple of years. I still have children in university. I want to be able to help them through school and I can't do it on a fixed income. Therefore, it would really be appreciated if I could work beyond the age of 65, if I am capable." We intend to ensure they have the right of choice.

With respect to people who work in various sectors—teachers, other professionals, police officers, firefighters, people even in the corporate sector—they are working within the proper environment of a good, solid collective agreement that entitles them to a particular retirement age and a set of factors that influences the age at which they can retire.

Let's look at teachers for a moment. I'm proud to be the husband of a public high school teacher who will have the opportunity to retire with the 85 factor, which is a combination of age and years of seniority. I'm very pleased to know that that is clearly set within the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' pension plan, and incidentally, with teachers, with assistance from the provincial government in allowing that opportunity to be created by lowering that factor from 90 to 85.

Providing a special benefit to meet the unique needs of children requiring a helping hand: one of the elements that was committed to was funding for special education to expand the programs that are already working fairly well in the province, but need to be expanded because we have growth in population but also because we have

expanded the identification of children with special needs. Once you expand the ability of the boards to identify children with special needs, you must be able to follow through and deliver the services to help with children of special needs.

We are looking to increase the Ontario disability support program payments. This is important to help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and more dignified lives. We know, it is clear, that we froze the welfare rates, but we also did one very important thing in this province: we separated the disabled from the welfare rolls. When the welfare rate was reduced by 21%, the disabled people were not touched; they did not suffer any decrease in their income. However, that being said, we have inflation in our society and therefore it is important to recognize that there is an increased cost of living. As a result of that, we want to make sure they also are able to cope with that increased cost of living. Therefore, they will have an increase in their disability payments.

1640

We're introducing a more comprehensive approach to Ontario's energy sector. The minister spoke very eloquently in the last few days on increasing Ontario's energy sector, increasing the supply, creating an integrated conservation plan and ensuring that pricing will continue to be stable.

We've announced a comprehensive rural strategy that is aimed at addressing the concerns raised by people in rural communities. The Minister of Education today very clearly addressed the question that was posed to her regarding the top-up funding for rural schools, particularly single-school communities in this province where that school acts not just as a school, but as an overall community centre. It's important that the specific rules surrounding the funding formula for schools and their utility factor be modified to address the single-school communities.

In health care, we pledge to help hospitals deal with SARS-related backlogs. There's a compensation package announced by Minister Clement for workers and other people who are impacted by SARS, and to help protect and promote our economy there's the investment in public relations advertising, particularly in the great campaign that's been launched to make sure Toronto is once again one of the leading cities in the world.

We are looking to engage Ontario's health professionals in developing the guaranteed waiting times for things such as general surgery, cataract procedures, cancer treatment and MRIs. One of the things I'm very happy to announce is the expansion of the cataract surgery program that Minister Clement is implementing. Being the son of a 78-year-old mother, I'm very proud of the fact that other seniors will now have the ability to engage and get more cataract procedures provided to them under the OHIP program.

We're launching an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program, breaking down barriers faced by nurse practitioners to expand their numbers and the range of services they're able to provide. Last week I spoke

briefly with a nurse practitioner who is very excited about the changes and the expansion of the program that would allow her to be a better health care deliverer in this province, and not be limited so much under the direction of a particular physician, but rather allowing her the opportunity to be a nurse practitioner in the full sense she should be entitled to be and that she is capable of doing to provide better services for the patients in that community.

We're improving access to doctors by increasing the number of international medical graduates trying to practise in Ontario by 20%. My honourable colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, who is the son of an immigrant and whose wife is a practising physician, very much welcomes this initiative. He's lobbied hard for it. Raminder Gill has worked very hard to try to expand this program to increase the number of international medical graduates so that they can practise in Ontario with clear-cut guidelines to provide expanded services for doctors, but also in addition to that, to make sure they don't have to completely redo the whole program where they have gone through their educational process in a different environment, but whose standards are equal to or as good as Ontario's.

We are looking to provide free tuition for current and future medical school students who agree to practise in underserved areas or join family health networks. I cite a couple of specific examples. The two medical schools have been announced and are on the road to being opened in both Sudbury and Thunder Bay. Speaking as a native of Sault Ste Marie, I'm really pleased and proud that we finally—I know my colleague from Sault Ste Marie, Tony Martin, is pleased—now have medical schools and training schools in northern Ontario. Once these students go to those schools, they will understand and appreciate the great lifestyle of northern Ontario and will be able to stay there and be a member of the northern community.

But just as important as that, we have many students from northern Ontario. I know colleagues of mine, kids that I grew up with who were bright enough to become good, solid professional doctors, went to medical school in southern Ontario and they never came back to the north. That's a pity because we have a lot of bright students in northern Ontario who, if given the opportunity to stay in northern Ontario to get an education, to get a job, we know would stay there.

We are looking to invest about \$6.5 million to support the Electronic Child Health Network North, and that allows more remote medical services to be provided to these patients.

In addition, we know there are systems that are operating now that are very successful. The Family Health Network, for example, which is a pilot project in various parts of the province, was modeled after the Algoma Health Unit in Sault Ste Marie, which has been there for—what, Tony, 30 years maybe? That family health unit, I must say, is the most successful deliverer of service in health care to its patients that I've seen any-



where. You have a group of dedicated health care practitioners. It astounded me for years why this model was never adopted anywhere else in the province, and I'm very happy to see that this particular model will be adopted and will be expanded in this province, particularly with the co-operation of the medical profession.

I'm going to take this last couple of minutes to talk about some of the ramifications of both the budget initiatives and the throne speech, in particular to my home riding of, well, not just Brampton Centre but Brampton in general.

We are very pleased that we will be building, or are in the process of building, a new hospital at Bramalea Road and Bovaird Drive. The leader of the third party roundly criticizes the process that we follow. In fact, I know he mentioned in his speech that Brampton was the system that they "would put a stop to."

I want to make it very clear to the residents of Brampton that the NDP stated very clearly that because this is a P3 project, they would put a stop to the process. That means the shovel that will likely be going in the ground in about three weeks would be stopped. Rather than having a hospital opening in two years, they would likely be caught up in legal entanglements for at least five, and I doubt that we would see a hospital in Brampton for another five or 10 years.

Just as it was committed by the minister of the day, by the Liberals in 1990—I think it was Minister Caplan. The approval for the new hospital was on her desk. She didn't sign it when Premier Peterson dropped the writ and, as a result, when the NDP took power, Brampton was left in the wilderness—a growing city, now 300,000-plus, with a small hospital of 375 beds. We did not benefit from the largesse that Windsor did, which had a smaller population and had as many as four or five hospitals. They decried the fact that they had not enough hospitals with a population of 200,000-plus or an area in Essex County of 300,000, and here we are, in Brampton, with 300,000 people and one single 375-bed hospital. Sixty per cent of our patients travel in order to get full and complete service.

This hospital will open. It's a \$350-million project; it's a 608-bed unit. It will be the largest community hospital—that is, non-teaching hospital—in this province and, furthermore, we are very pleased that Minister Clement announced that the current Brampton hospital will be redeveloped to have 112 complex continuing care beds, continue to have a modern emergency and ambulatory care centre, an eye institute, out-patient surgery and a comprehensive rehabilitation program.

**1650**

We are building over 1,100 new long-term-care beds in Brampton. Province-wide, this government has increased spending 7.3% in this year alone. That's \$1.9 billion; \$8 billion since 1995. I don't know where the cutbacks are that the opposition talks about; they are non-existent.

In education, the Peel Board of Education budget increased by over \$188 million since 1997, the year that

the student-focused funding model was introduced. The total budget is now \$857 million, which is a 22% increase. Why? We have the students; they deserve the funding to be able to go to school.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board budget has had a \$169-million increase since 1997. Now it's at \$603 million, which is a 28% increase.

We've improved the new school capital funding formula in 1997, and helped to build or renovate more than 37 new schools in Brampton alone. That is a record. That is the most new construction and rehabilitation programs in the history of the Peel boards of education, in Brampton alone.

The Peel board is building 15 elementary and eight new high schools, creating space for over 10,400 students. The total funding for those schools exceeds \$105 million.

The separate board is building seven elementary and seven new high schools in Brampton alone, not in Peel, creating space for over 7,400 students. The total funding for these schools exceeds \$95 million.

This government is putting its money where its mouth is. We continue to have the balanced budget, and this is what we are all about. It is proper management and allocation of the taxpayer's dollar in a responsible manner, putting the money where it's needed. In 1995, drastic cuts were required to government spending because we were bleeding all over the place. We stopped the bleeding. We now have revenue that is unprecedented as a result of tax cuts. In addition to that, with that revenue we are allocating those dollars specifically where they are needed, where the people of Ontario wanted them: in health care, in education, in law enforcement. In Peel alone, we've hired 124 new officers this past year, and we're very proud that Chief Catney complimented this government for its support.

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston):** I listened to the member with some interest. I note that the member forgot to mention that this Conservative throne speech is really a "me too" document. It's a compilation of a great many Liberal ideas. For example my leader, Dalton McGuinty, pledged 1,000 more police officers in our Growing Strong Communities platform that we released. That's lifted right out of our platform. A number of other ideas, and you go on down the list—it clearly demonstrates time and again that this Conservative Party, this Eves-Harris government has run out of steam and run out of ideas so they're lifting ideas from Liberal platform pieces.

I want to comment on what the member was talking about with respect to health care. He forgot to mention that this is a government that shut down 20 emergency rooms in the province. This is a government that fired 1,000 nurses. This is a government that, in my riding, closed down the Northwestern General Hospital. It has not been reopened. In fact, the plans for restructuring have never been undertaken. We have a situation in my riding where health care services that ought to be de-

livered are not being delivered because this government has failed to move ahead.

When this member talks about what a wonderful job this government has done on health care, I remind him that your record is abysmal when it comes to health care. You have systematically reduced the ability of our health care system in Ontario to deal with a growing list of problems, and that's because you have run out of ideas, you have run out of steam, you are not acting in the interests of all Ontarians.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I am pleased to respond to the speech by the member from Brampton, who, yes, hails from Sault Ste Marie, a place that we both dearly appreciate and love, but we come at this job from two completely different perspectives. My perspective on the speech from the throne that we're debating here these days in this House is that this government has yet again missed another opportunity to say to the people of Ontario that they believe in them, they believe in their communities, they believe in the power of government to improve their lot in life and to improve the communities in which they live.

They have not done that, and they have not done that because they've chosen to give away the revenue that government generates by way of its tax system. It was interesting to hear the member say that they were actually increasing revenue for government by giving tax breaks. That in itself is a misnomer. I believe this government has missed eight years of opportunity, good economic times that generated revenue for this government in record amounts that they then in turn gave away to those in our communities who needed it the least when they could have taken that money, literally billions of dollars, and invested it in good community programs, in education and health care that would have served all of us for years to come.

The member speaks of a medical school in northern Ontario, which we all dearly anticipate with great expectation, except that, like everything else they do, they have embroiled it in great chaos and difficulty. We hear today that it won't in fact be built on time or opened on time, that it will be another year before we see that. That's not unexpected from this government.

**Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio):** I certainly enjoyed the presentation made by the member from Brampton Centre, just an excellent summary of the throne speech.

The member from York South-Weston made reference to the 1,000 police officers being copied from their platform. We already put in the 1,000 they're talking about some five years ago. We're moving on to another 1,000, for a total of 2,000 officers. I bring to his attention the fact that when we brought in those 1,000 five years ago, they voted against it; so a typical flip-flop of what happened.

And he was a little confused about the closed hospital beds. That happened in the 10 lost years. That happened when only two hospitals were built in Ontario. The member from Brampton Centre was making reference to

building one there, and I'm pretty proud that in my riding, during my term of eight years, we've built two hospitals, one that was opened some three years ago and another one that will be opened this fall. That's two in one riding, while in 10 years they only built two in the province of Ontario.

I'm so pleased to hear the member from Brampton Centre speaking about his hospital and how proud he is of it. I'm rather disappointed to hear how the Liberals dragged their feet and wouldn't sign before they called an election, and then when the NDP came along, for their five lost years here in Ontario, they cancelled that construction. Then they talk about health care and their vision. It's a vision to close beds like they did, it's a vision to pull the spade out of the ground and not allow a hospital to be built. I'm so pleased for the member from Brampton Centre. I know how I feel about the hospitals being built in my riding and I'm certainly thrilled that he is experiencing that same kind of thing, that he can look forward to that grand opening in a couple of years' time, to cut a blue ribbon.

1700

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** There are two things I'd like to get the member's comments on further, because he didn't have enough time in his speech to deal with them. One is the virtual orgy of blatant, self-serving, self-congratulatory political advertising that his government is engaging in, because I know when he ran as a candidate, first of all, he was interested in ensuring that there was not anything in the way of a bad expenditure of money. When you run on that particular platform of wanting to save money—we now have television ads you can't miss. There have to be two or three an hour. The Premier, I understand, is now going to go on the US stations and broadcast back into Ontario, knowing the Buffalo and Detroit stations are watched back in Ontario. He's going to do an intro and the end of the SARS one. We have radio ads going on now extolling the virtues of your virtual budget that happened at the Magna plant. We have full-page newspaper ads. We have pamphlets arriving on your doorstep virtually daily.

So I ask the member whether he thinks that can be justified—because I know he's a person who believes that his government particularly, that ran on a platform of not abusing public office or the taxpayers—whether he believes that this orgy of government advertising is appropriate.

Second, I heard him playing down the significance of West Nile virus for the people of Ontario. I want him to correct me if he can. He talked about more people being killed in car accidents than would die of the West Nile disease. I note that Dr Neil Rau, who is an expert in this field—and I think is from his general part of the province, Mississauga and Brampton area—said that the Ontario government was actually hiding information last summer on the West Nile virus and how serious it was.

So I hope the member will be able to address those two items.



**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Brampton Centre has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Spina:** I always listen with respect to the member from St Catharines. It's always interesting. If this government is engaged in an orgy of advertising, you must have had five full years of that, because five years of Liberal government was 10 years too long. I remember the honourable member on his Ministry of the Environment ads. Not only did they try to give a message; he had his picture in it. Why would we be interested in the minister's picture in the Ministry of the Environment ads? That was another orgy of Liberal advertising spending.

On the other issue, I'd be happy to clarify the record. West Nile is an important and worrisome element in this society, just as SARS is. It's important that we remain diligent. It's important that the government is diligent. We do not trivialize it, because we should all be diligent, wary and cautious. We live in a global economy and there's an opportunity for us to be exposed to all kinds of different things. That's why it is important for us as citizens in this province to make sure that we have good screening processes, good protective processes and good educational information from the ministry, from the government to allow the citizens to take proper precautions when we are out in the community.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Spina:** No, I don't want to be shushed on that. Thank you very much.

But we're very happy to know that the criticism was to the WHO. We have 2,000 people killed in car accidents in this province. Why didn't they issue a ban on driving? That's how silly their ban on Toronto was. That's what I wanted to correct.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-St Clair.

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** I will be sharing my time with the member for Parkdale-High Park.

I want to take the brief amount of time that I have to first of all address what a throne speech is, what it should be, its parliamentary context and then try, again in the brief time I have, to share some thoughts about the throne speech before us.

A throne speech sets out the plan a government has for a session of parliament. It's an ancient parliamentary ritual, one that goes back to the beginnings at Westminster. It's one that historically, and by our own standing orders, precedes a budget. The government lays out its agenda, then it brings in a budget. Now this throne speech was brought in in this House amid great fanfare. They brought out the calèche that hadn't been used in some 20 years, as I understand it, to bring His Honour to the Legislature.

They did the speech here in the House, but unfortunately they had done something they called a budget in Brampton. They laid out a series of ideas that were supposed to define this government. I read the speech, I attended the speech and I reviewed it, and I share the

views of several columnists who said there was certainly no vision in it. It was a grab bag of different things. I think one columnist referred to it as something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. Many of the ideas contemplate the spending of money, yet they weren't contained in the budget speech. So we had a document tabled in this House that had a grab bag of promises, some which make some sense and some which were lifted from our policy documents. Mandatory retirement, for instance, was taken from Mr Colle's private member's bill. A number of other ideas, like the thousand police officers was taken from Dalton McGuinty. It really wasn't a visionary document, so I'm wondering will we be getting a platform or a campaign document sometime in the next two weeks? The speculation is that they will move to ban teachers' strikes. We will oppose that because that, among the other desperation, Hail Mary passes if you will, is from a government that's on its last legs, a government that has no vision, no new ideas, is stale and is tired.

The Minister of Education ought to be very careful as their party proceeds notionally on the idea of banning teachers' strikes, as should the Premier. The Premier has said many things over many years, many things on clips about that very issue. So it would have been nice to have seen a throne speech that actually had a vision, but this had no vision. Instead, they fell back to their old, right-wing, non-tested, ideologically based ideas that aren't selling.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Duncan:** The former judge for Ottawa, Mr Guzzo, has a big mouth that can be heard from here and down the Ottawa Valley, but I tell you, Mr Watson will put him in his place in very short order, I would suggest. We welcome yet another Conservative who has come to the fold on this side of the House. It means Guzzo's gone. He will not know what hit him when this thing's done, and that's because this government lacks vision, it lacks ideas.

They're back to the old rhetoric about tax cuts working. I love to hear them talk about the 208 tax cuts. Well, you know what we did? We went back and we looked at those tax cuts, and something like 190 of them were for businesses; they weren't for average Ontarians. If you were someone who owned a racetrack and produced motion pictures and made more than a million dollars a year, I would expect you to vote Tory. You'd be absolutely crazy not to, because that's what this has been all about. It's been about their friends, it's been about a narrow, ideological agenda that even the Premier himself seemed to renounce immediately after the leadership. But then he came back. Now he's back to the Common Sense Revolution. We don't know where he's going to be next week, we really don't.

There was no vision in the throne speech. We have not seen an election document, and we're looking forward to that in the next two weeks.

**Interjection:** We don't have an elected Premier.

**Mr Duncan:** We don't even have an elected Premier, that's right. He hasn't been elected by anybody. So we're looking forward to an election. We'll be reviewing a number of issues, some of which were in the platform, some of which were in the speech from the throne, some of which, presumably, the government will be introducing in the next day or so. But it's lacking a vision, and at its core that's what a throne speech ought to be. This is a grab bag.

1710

They're very nervous over there. They're jumpy. They're edgy. We understand that we're going to hear more about—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Duncan:** The Minister of Education likes to heckle. The Minister of Education, who is on the record as supporting the teachers' right to strike, is about to flip-flop. We know that. It'll be interesting seeing her defend her past statements versus what they are going to campaign on in the next couple of weeks; it will be very interesting. We're looking forward to that election.

So this document lacked substance, it lacked ideas. The only good ideas were taken right from Dalton McGuinty. Those were the only ones, and we've urged them to pass. My colleague Mr Bartolucci, his bill has been lifted. That is an important thing to keep in mind.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Duncan:** I think I've struck a nerve with Mr Guzzo.

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean):** You have.

**Mr Duncan:** I think I have, as has Mr Watson.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Duncan:** I'm sorry, his Honour Justice Guzzo. Is that the proper term, "His Honour"? Well, His Honour is about to meet, as I say, Mr Watson. We'll have Mr Watson to deal with and we'll look forward to that.

People in Ontario know. They're not going to be cowed by this government's lack of vision, its twisting of statistics, its factual inaccuracies, defending a record that, frankly, is indefensible. We need to return and restore our vital public services: health care, education, the environment. Most importantly, we need a change, real change, change that lays out a carefully costed platform and delivers a balanced budget. This government that prides itself on being—what is it they call themselves?

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** Fiscally responsible.

**Mr Duncan:** Fiscally responsible. The only way they can balance their budget this year is by selling off \$2.2 billion of our assets. The Dominion Bond Rating Service says that, not me.

The debt: guess which government, next to Bob Rae's government, has added more debt to Ontario's balance sheet than any other? Which one was that? The Harris-Eves government. A net increase of approximately \$16 billion. In effect, they borrowed their tax cuts and they didn't equitably distribute them—absolutely.

So this is a failed government that lacks vision, that lacks a leader, that lacks a meaningful agenda. They will

attempt a Hail Mary pass in the next few weeks, if they have the guts to call an election. They will find those wedge issues, but I say to you that the people of this province can see through them. The people of this province can see through desperation. The people of the province will reject a wedge issue platform.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** They haven't yet.

**Mr Duncan:** No, they haven't. That's why we want you to call an election. So let's get it on. Let's have this thing on. Let's go at it. Let's take it out of here.

In conclusion, we need real change in this province. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals offer a new vision that's carefully planned out, carefully costed, that's for the people of Ontario, that will deliver meaningful change, take education out of the hands of wreckers and put it into the arms of builders, take health care away from those who would privatize it and make it less available and have people committed to the principles of public medicare, managing a system that has served this province and this country well throughout its 40 years of existence.

They want a government that will restore economic and environmental confidence. This party, this Liberal Party led by Dalton McGuinty, will do that. It has laid out a plan to do so, a plan that has been costed carefully. We'll balance the budget and give Ontarians back a government they can be proud of again.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** It is my pleasure to join the debate and to follow the member from Windsor, who I think has aptly put the context for this. It doesn't in fact have any of the drive or energy you would expect from a sitting government, a sitting government that gave itself 138 days to prepare for this session, 138 days to wind up and see what it had left to offer the people of this province. At least we used to see in past throne speeches some huffing and some puffing, some effort. Instead, this is the last wheeze from this government, barely getting out what it is they might have left to stand for.

We know the context for this. We saw this. We saw a government that thought it would be exultant that they were going to do all kinds of things, finding out, in sad example after example, the shortcomings of its own agenda. They tried to get rid of their last leader. They got rid of him. They've replaced him. They're tinkering. They move this way and that, but this throne speech doesn't summarize for the people of this province any kind of future that they would want to have a part in. Is this really, in fact, anything close to the best that Ontario can be? Does it have anything to offer the people of this province in terms of some hope for a future that they would really want to be part of?

Sadly, it isn't. It is instead in service, as most of the instruments of government at the provincial level are, of a party seeking re-election. This is the nimblest, the best they can put together in the service of themselves. It's really the only way to understand this particular document and this apparent direction. We don't have from this government a vigorous agenda, even for the



short eight weeks it says—possibly pretends—we might be in this House. There are not enough bills or initiatives that require our full attention, yet the people of this province do need our attention, do need energy coming from elsewhere.

Let me give you a quick review of what could have been in the throne speech. There could have been a commitment from a government that was going to make public education work to improve the test scores on standardized tests such that 75% met the provincial standard, from around 50% or 55% today. There could have been a word coming from this government in this throne speech. There could have been a commitment to stop giving up too early on students in school and commit to have 16- and 17-year-olds be engaged in learning in programs that could work for them. There could have been a message sent to every set of parents in this province that their young children would not get lost in the crowd, that instead they would be in classes of 20 where they could get immediate attention to their needs, their potentials and perhaps their challenges at a time that would help them and, frankly, do a good thing for the people of this province by saving the money that we'll have to pay later on.

There could have been a speech to tell plainly and clearly to the people of this province that our practice of dependence on coal-fired generation has been wrong, has been misplaced. Instead, it could have said clearly that by 2007 we can do something exact, precise and measurable and that is to close those coal-fired plants. But that would have taken a throne speech from a different government, from a Liberal government, the same government that would have said 15% more doctors would have been trained in this province, and 8,000 full-time nurses of the kind that would have helped us to deal with the stress and the strain of the SARS crisis that is still with us. It would have been plain incredible about setting maximum waiting times because it wouldn't have come from a government, this time, borrowing from this side of the aisle, but from a government that said four years ago that radiation treatment will be available within four weeks. How many patients have that available to them today? Just 31% of patients needing radiation treatment are getting it within the four weeks that this government now, at the end of its tenure, at the end of its leash, would propose to have available.

We could have sent a signal to our embattled cities. We could have said this is a government that isn't going to aggrandize everything unto itself and would share 2% of the gas tax to make sure that transportation and a turnaround, in terms of liveability, of cities could start to happen. But those things aren't in the throne speech.

The things that are are awfully telling, particularly when this government turns to specific subjects like education. Where are the solutions? Where is the energy, the roll-up-the-sleeves hard work to give people confidence back in the schools we have in this province? The language in this speech is very telling. It says that in the past some schools were privileged. That language

does aptly tell us what this government did about that. They pulled all the schools down. They felt that some schools conferred too many advantages on their students. So this government's response to that was to break down some of the existing system and pull everybody down to a lower standard. That's perhaps one of the few lines in this speech that aptly and accurately conveys where this government is coming from when it has to do with education. It still tries to exhort the value of some of its reforms, and I would recommend to people the study done by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, which looked at the merits of what the government has been attempting these last seven and eight years as they have poked and prodded people in the education system. They said that the implementation is so poorly done that students in Ontario are worse off than they would have been if it hadn't been attempted at all.

#### 1720

This comes from a government that now, late in its mandate, after closing nearly 100 rural schools, after not giving Avon Maitland and a whole range of parts of the province any access to rural funding—in Oxford, for example, only after we raised the issue in this House about southern Ontario schools in rural settings getting access to the fair kind of funding that would allow them to be treated properly did a small amount of money appear. But we didn't have the member from Oxford, we didn't have the members of this House, standing up on behalf of their schools and saying, "We need to have this fair treatment. This one-size-fits-all formula doesn't work in Oxford county." We didn't get that.

Instead, we have had 400 public schools off the official roster the government keeps on its Web site, 200 more private schools—and we know how to gauge and how to measure the intensity and the sincerity of the government when it comes to public schools. They put in this speech, as they equivocate back and forth—do they want to be known for something, do they not want to be known for something—about their private school tax credit. This is a government that would divert \$500 million into private schools with no conditions. Any person with five children can access \$3,500 of public funds for each of those kids, any single one. This is what this government is going to offer. It doesn't say in this throne speech or anywhere else that 70% of that money is going to end up in private schools, not in religious schools, and in fact they aren't the primary beneficiaries.

What is very troubling is that this government forced itself to appoint a commission—Dr Rozanski—and we see now where this government is coming from. It's got to be a crushing disappointment for people out there who hoped that maybe even this government could be forced to do what was necessary for the children of this province. Instead of seeing the real dollars and the real commitment to policy change that Dr Rozanski is looking for, in fact the \$854 that Dr Rozanski said, he caught this government. He actually has identified specifically in every area where students have been made to pay for the other priorities of this government. The

government pretends in this speech that that job is done. That means that less than \$300 is going to find its way back into the essential education services that these students need. That means that they will go without. There will not be any funding to put back the 15,000 teaching positions this government has cut that used to be available to help kids in their classrooms, in their libraries, with music and with phys ed. There is no funding for children in poverty. Not one dime has been committed as recommended by Dr Rozanski—none for English as a second language to help kids in our cities do the fundamental things they need to do to get ahead, which is to learn language, a service that most boards that are heavily engaged in it say has been cut by a half or two thirds.

Most of the money needed for transportation reform is not coming from this government; in fact, 80% of it has not been committed to. There is no money to repair schools even though the Rozanski report says there is a \$5.6-billion backlog in our schools. The Nativity school, in one of the members' ridings opposite, has met over and over with the Minister of Energy and asked him to be involved, to be engaged, has shown him the bathrooms, the washrooms, the things that are falling down in that school, and nothing's been forthcoming, and it's not in this throne speech. And it's not in the government's response on Rozanski that basically there is no money for computers, no money for the dollars that are missing in special ed. The government instead has used its money as this speech has been used: as an exercise in false hope, in self-promotion, in an attempt for re-election. Instead, the public interest has lost out.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions.

**Mr Martin:** It was interesting to listen to the two members of the Liberal Party challenge the government in terms of their throne speech and the lack of vision therein. As I said, they again point out the missed opportunity that was there over the last eight years to actually do something concrete and constructive in support of communities and some of the public services that we've seen deteriorate, particularly our health care system, our education system, and the ability of communities to look after infrastructure—water and sewer, for example—and the very terrible, tragic circumstances that we saw in Walkerton, which is a reflection of the diminishing investment that the province has continued to make in the public health of our communities and of the province.

When you take a look at what each of the parties, as we are now on the precipice of an election, has to offer in terms of vision for the province, there isn't really a whole lot of difference, in my view, in my purview of the presentation that has been made so far by the Liberals or the Conservatives. The only really clear commitment being made that is an alternative to what we've seen for the eight years around the province these days is the Public Power document platform that has been released by the New Democratic Party—our caucus and our party—that we're taking and very confidently sharing

with people in community after community across the province to show them what really could be done with the public money that is collected on their behalf if they had a government that was really committed to making government work, to creating healthy communities, to supporting every individual citizen who calls Ontario home, in their aspirations to have good schooling both at the elementary and secondary level and at the university level, to have good health care and to have communities that in fact work for them.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I appreciate that opposition members are here to oppose and be critical. I, myself, believe that the government and the administration—

**Mr Duncan:** Cansfield used to be a Tory.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** She's a wonderful person; I like her quite a bit—have done a good job. I think that a million-plus jobs, 600,000 off welfare, has been a boon for this province: good prosperity, good growth, good investment, tax cuts—\$16 billion in tax cuts and \$16 billion in additional revenue.

I appreciate the fact that members opposite don't believe that the changes we made in the education system were good. I disagree. I have two children in the public school system in Toronto. My son is in grade 10 and my daughter is in grade 8, and I can tell you, from before we came into office until after we got elected, the changes I've seen have been excellent. Yes, it's more difficult; I don't deny it. My son himself has said that math is very difficult and I said to him, "You know what? It's supposed to be difficult. It's supposed to be tough and you're supposed to learn. You're supposed to develop skills to prepare you for university."

I've been to their schools on a number of occasions and I think they're well-run. I think the students are achieving at levels they had never achieved before. I think this government is expecting students to do better and they are doing better. I think the testing is proving that, because every year we test they do get better. I think if you're going to go and graduate from grade 12, there should be some obligation that you could pass a literacy test that a grade 10 student would be expected to pass. I don't think that's an unreasonable request to make of someone graduating out of grade 12. I know the opposition is there to criticize and I hear them criticize daily. But from an economic point of view, from a social welfare point of view, from an education point of view I believe, without a doubt in my mind, that in 2003 this province is infinitely better off than it was in 1995, when we came to power.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** I want to express to my colleagues from Windsor-St Clair and Parkdale-High Park my gratitude to them for pointing out some of the things that are going to be brought to this province, and that's the theme: the change that's necessary. There are changes in the wind and we're going to get change and we're going to provide change. That's why my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and the Liberal caucus have come out with a plan much earlier than this government has and



we're quite prepared to govern Ontario in a very smart, manageable way.

I want to make a point about the fiscal responsibility of this government. Let me share with you a fact: seven days a week, 24 hours a day, \$75,000 an hour is being spent by this government on consultants—\$75,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The auditor said that \$660 million, up from \$230 million, is being spent by this government on trying to teach it how to manage this government. It doesn't know how to do it so it's spending that much money. Let me ask a favour; let me ask a favour of this government: would you please spend a few hours of that consultant time to try to save BCI, Brantford Collegiate Institute, in my riding, that's going to be condemned because your funding formula doesn't save it? Would you please do me a favour and stop closing the rural schools? Use a few hours of time to make sure that those schools in my riding—and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, because I'll speak for him—don't get closed.

And how about those brownfields? They've put the regulations in now and they're not making any sense whatsoever. They're not giving us a dime on brownfields.

Why don't you use some of those hours to give Laurier Brantford—a campus that has not been given one dime of capital money. It's the only one in the province that has not been given a dime of money, yet we're still running this campus and we're going to have 700 students on campus next year. Why don't you use that? Why don't you stop perpetrating this on to the people of Ontario?

1730

**Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words in response to the speech from the Liberals across the aisle.

First, I want to say that as they started their presentation, they made a very good point: what a throne speech is to do, which is to outline the vision of the future for government and where the government believes we should be going in the next session and on into the future. I believe this throne speech does just that. I guess that's maybe the end of where I agree with their synopsis of what happened.

I think it's very important that we recognize where we've come from. They talk about their spending in their time in office and the fact that we came here with an \$11-billion deficit. That means their governments were spending \$11 billion a year more than they were taking in. Yes, I think everyone in 1995 agreed that that was not going to be solved in one year, that in fact we had to reduce the spending and increase the revenues in order to make ends meet. As we promised in the throne speech of 1995, we accomplished that at the end of that term.

We have now moved along and we have had five balanced budgets. We have paid down the debt by \$5 billion. We have created over a million new jobs in this province, in our economy. I think this is all good news.

But they are right: we need a vision of where we're going from here, and that's what the throne speech does.

I also think it's very interesting; we've heard a couple of comments from the Liberals who suggest there are some things in this throne speech that in fact they have suggested in the past that they would implement if they should form a government. I find that not hard to understand, because I don't think there is anything that the Liberals haven't promised at one time or another. So I don't find it hard to understand that right now we have something in here. But for those items that would be the same things they have promised at one time in the past, I would surely hope we can count on their support for that in this throne speech.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Windsor-St Clair has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Duncan:** I would like to say that Ontario's prosperity is due to the most productive workforce in the world, it is due to strong businesses and it is due to strong individuals.

I would submit to this government that yours is a record of lost opportunity. You took prosperity and squandered it, at the very time we could have been investing in public services, at the very time we could have been improving our schools and hospitals. At the only time in the last 30 years where government had revenues rolling in, you chose to give those surpluses away in tax cuts for the wealthy, and that is a mistake we will rue for many years to come.

I say to the government, your record on education betrays falling test scores. Your successes are not successes; your successes are mere rhetoric. There had to be change. All sides agreed to that. All sides proceeded on change. Now let's look at the test results and let's make sure our kids have enough teachers, enough textbooks and enough resources to learn the things they need to learn to make sure that this country and this province can continue to be the strongest economic engine in the western world.

It is the height of arrogance for the government to suggest that this province's success economically is a result of their policies. I would submit to the government that yours is a record of lost opportunity, broken promises and lack of real vision for the future.

But there is an opportunity in the next short while to change all that. There is an opportunity for real change, an opportunity to choose a government and a Premier that will no longer take credit for the achievements of our working families but will give those working families the supports they need to continue to be resourceful and productive and continue to make Ontario the best place in the world to live. For real change, I challenge the government: throw out the speech, call an election and let's let the people have a say.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The Chair recognizes the member from Northumberland.

**Hon Mr Galt:** I was listening to the last speakers and I found them quite entertaining, especially the member

for Oxford who made reference that the Liberals had promised everything under the sun, so in the throne speech how could we possibly miss their claiming some items in there that they have already promised, thought of and committed to. They just keep going all over the place. The member from Oxford is absolutely right.

The member from Windsor-St Clair got ranting and raging, going on about missed opportunities. In the late 1980s, we had one of the biggest booms in the history of Ontario, not by their economic policies I can assure you, but because of the tremendous boom that was going on in the US. In spite of that, they still couldn't balance a budget. You look at the track record of our present Premier when he was Minister of Finance. He set in motion and got that turned around, that economic shift. It was in just terrible shape, but he turned around in a space like the Toronto harbour the great big ocean liner of economic chaos and ended up with a balanced budget, now balanced for four years and predicted in the budget for this year to be balanced once again. I think that is a phenomenal record, one that he should be very proud of and that our government can be proud of as well.

I was interested in the comments made by the member from Brant, concerned about \$75,000 an hour for consultants. I don't know where he got that figure. It's interesting that he pulled it out of the air, but I'll take it for granted that what he's telling us is reasonably accurate. I think of when we took office in 1995. Well over a million dollars an hour was being spent that was not being taken in. We had a budget at that time of under \$50 billion, with over an \$11-billion deficit, roughly \$11.3 billion, that we weren't taking in. Mr Speaker, what was happening was we were laying the debt on these young people sitting around you on the platform. They're the ones who are going to have to pay off that debt once they graduate from university and get into a working career. That's who we were dumping the debt on to, and you people were responsible for doing that.

Thanks to our present Premier, who was then Minister of Finance, we got that all turned around and it's now a balanced budget. But we went from a \$50-billion budget to now over a \$60-billion budget and it's still balanced, with some \$16 billion in tax cuts for people in Ontario. By cutting those taxes, we've stimulated the economy enough that over a million people, 1.15 million people, are now working in Ontario who weren't working eight years ago. With their revenue, with the taxes they're paying, with the gizmos they're buying and the sales tax etc, we've ended up with a \$16-billion increase in tax revenue here in Ontario, a proven success story.

I think our track record speaks for itself as you look back on what's been going on.

More recently, I'm so proud of the leadership of our party and our government when it comes to what happened with SARS. This is the first time a medical emergency has been signed, rolled out and used to protect the people in Ontario since 1867, since the founding of the province. It's the only time it's been used. We responded; our government, our minister, our

Premier responded within an hour of knowing what the crisis was and what was going on, and as you read and now find out the potential of that disease, it's probably saved a very large number of people's lives, possibly some right in this Legislature who might have succumbed to that, had that leadership not been there.

We have one phenomenal Premier in his ability to respond. That takes nothing away from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, who was right at the forefront, and also Dr D'Cunha and Dr Young, who showed phenomenal leadership in their job, in their role, and all of the medical community that responded—hospitals, nurses and physicians.

1740

We've seen other leadership, such as with the double cohort, and—it's way overdue—getting rid of grade 13. There was an attempt in the early 1980s, but it moved to OACs, not really getting rid of grade 13; it was just a change in name. We were the only country, the only province or jurisdiction that I know of, that had that extra year. When I went to veterinary college back in the fall of 1957—

**Mr Guzzo:** What year?

**Hon Mr Galt:** In 1957. It's a while ago. Most of my classmates were from other provinces. When it came to the end of that year there were over 20 who failed out, and most of them were from Ontario, many of them valedictorians in their local high schools. It wasn't students from other provinces with grade 12. So since the fall of 1957, I've been on a campaign to get rid of grade 13. It's finally happening. It's the right thing.

We've invested \$2.3 billion in new buildings and classrooms to handle this increased number of students. We've also increased the funding. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has said she will spend whatever is necessary to ensure that the professors and the schools and everything is in place to look after them. This is being third party. The various university professors are saying the same thing.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Galt:** Well, they're laughing on the other side of the House, but they know. They've seen the quotes in the paper. They know what's going on.

Now, getting around to the throne speech, which is what this debate is about, I hear the opposition talk about a lack of vision. Maybe the vision should have been repeated in every other paragraph for simplicity, to assist them to follow what the vision is. The vision is all about stimulating the economy, stimulating it through tax cuts. We've had way over 200 tax cuts now since we've taken office compared to that lost decade when there were some 66 tax increases, devastating to the economy at the time. Now we've had all of these tax cuts, stimulated the economy, an extra \$16 billion in revenue coming in. That money now can be used to balance the budget and invest in education, invest in health care, invest in our other social programs.



This is a vision that is there. It's been a vision since we took office, and that vision is continuing with our present Premier.

I'm so pleased that in the throne speech there's a fair amount of talk about agriculture and what's going on in rural Ontario, that a rural strategy will be rolled out. This takes me back to the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal that Premier Harris asked me to chair back in the spring of 2000. That is one of the recommendations that came out there: jump teams, economic development such as OSTAR-RED, the rural economic development portion of OSTAR. This rural strategy is going to be a vision for rural Ontario and, I think, very, very helpful not only to the ministry but to everyone who lives in rural Ontario.

Our Premier has a real concern about farmers and agriculture in rural Ontario. As a matter of fact, during the leadership campaign he mentioned it regularly. Shortly after he took office, he did have a round table with key farmers from around the province. They met in Guelph on June 6, and a lot of good information came from that.

We've also led with protecting the family farm from unionization. That was mentioned in the throne speech. We cannot afford to have strikes and/or lockouts on the family farm, because it's just logical, with the produce that's being produced, you just can't go and cut the grain or whatever crop whenever you please. There's only one or two days when it's ripe and at the right stage to go ahead and harvest.

There are also comments made in the throne speech as well as the budget about the Nutrient Management Act and how farmers are good stewards of the land, protecting our environment. Of course in any profession or trade you can find a few bad apples, and consequently the Nutrient Management Act has been brought in to assure the public that the land will be properly looked after as it relates to nutrients being applied to it.

All in all, I think some pretty good news was being rolled out there. Also if I could, just for a moment, for agriculture, reflect back on the budget speech that was delivered back in March, it made reference to farmers being able to have a farm card that they can take with them to stores, which will exempt them from the retail sales tax, something that they have been asking for for some time.

Also, it was made reference to in that budget—and of course it won't be long until we do debate budget bills etc., and that certainly will happen in these hallowed halls. One was exempting the land transfer tax when farmland is being exchanged between family members.

It also talked about an Ontario wine strategy. If I could just make reference to the tremendous evolution of the wine industry in Prince Edward county over the last five, six, maybe seven years, I believe there are some three wineries that are now in place in Prince Edward county. It's growing very, very nicely. It's going to assist tremendously in the tourism industry. My congratulations to those entrepreneurs and those pioneers in Prince

Edward County that are heading off into the vineyards and growing the wines, and also developing the brewing establishments and wineries.

Also in the budget was the cutting of capital tax rates by some 10%, introducing an additional 100% corporate income tax deduction for new investments in self-generation of electricity from alternative or renewable energy sources, including ethanol and biodiesel. Certainly, the production of ethanol from corn is a big boost for farmers, as it's my understanding that we're importing ethanol at this point. There's more demand than is being produced here. We look forward to producing more ethanol in the future.

There have been a few comments made, especially by the member from Brampton Centre, who was talking about his hospital and the fact they're starting now to build a new hospital in Brampton. I just want to reflect back for a few minutes, if I may, to when we were talking about health care and the hospital that's being built in west Northumberland, a 137-bed hospital to be opened on the first Friday in October for open house. It will be fully up and operational on October 22. It's on budget and on time. It's a bit of an exception to be on budget. It's actually \$1 million or so under budget. We have a tremendous board and overseers there that are looking after that hospital. I had the pleasure on Monday morning to be able to announce to my constituents that the provincial government would be funding the operation of their CT scanner. That will make this a truly state-of-the-art hospital for one that is that size. The community is pretty excited and pretty thrilled with what is evolving, and the fact that the new hospital—if you happen to be driving down 401, it's right on the cloverleaf, the Burnham Street exit, going into Cobourg. It's a very, very visible building, a very impressive structure, indeed. It's going to look after all of the municipalities in west Northumberland.

Then, just as the last election was being called, we were into construction in Quinte West at the Trenton Memorial Hospital site. A very significant wing, you might say, was being built for the rooms as well as surgery. The older part of the hospital is now under renovation to upgrade it for long-term care, radiology and some of the other areas.

A lot of good things are happening in health care. It's just unfortunate the opposition didn't recognize what is going on out there. During their combined term, for some 10 years, two hospitals were built in the province of Ontario, I'm told. They can prove me wrong, but my understanding is two hospitals. I understand there was one in Orangeville. I don't know where the other one was. Dear knows. I have no idea. But two in my riding have been built during the last eight years.

I think it was interesting and very brave, on the part of our government in the throne speech, to talk about wait times in our hospitals for things like general surgery, cataract procedures, cancer treatment and diagnostic MRIs. Of course the throne speech committed us to an additional 20 MRIs and another five CT scanners.

1750

There was a tremendous turnaround in our emergency rooms when we brought in the triage. I happened to have an unfortunate experience four years ago with a kidney stone. I went through that. They hustled me through pretty quickly, I can tell you, when I first went in with the kidney stone. When I went back for some routine X-rays, I sat back and had to wait for three or four other people who were obviously in more distress than I was at the time. It just makes so much sense.

I also think in terms of Telehealth, where people can phone in and get some indication of their need, whether they should be going to an emergency room or whether it's just something routine and not all that urgent. Those are the kinds of things that have been introduced that are new and innovative.

We're also looking at a very aggressive nursing recruitment program and assisting nurses with tuition. We've already been doing that for physicians if they'll go to underserved areas. That's something that has been carried out by some of the armed forces in the past. We're also promoting international graduates more, opening it up by some 20% more than it was before.

We've developed a new medical school. This is a first in a very long time, with split campuses in northern Ontario. This will be where northern students will be trained. It's the hope, and I expect it's logical, that they will stay in the north afterwards. I think it's going to work out very well.

A tremendous number of good things are happening in health care. A very high percentage of the hospitals in Ontario are either under construction, are being renovated or are being replaced. There was a tremendous deficit with the hospitals in Ontario when we took office. It was most unfortunate that some 10,000 hospital beds, acute care beds, had been closed, but no hospitals closed. There was not the intestinal fortitude in the two opposition parties when they were in government to take that extra step and really do what was needed. When we took office, the Honourable Jim Wilson appointed the Health Services Restructuring Commission and they did some pretty tough things, some that hurt me, but in the end it is happening and it's going the right way.

I look at the hospital in west Northumberland. The right thing is happening in the end. There was a struggle in between. Three studies before recommended that very thing. The HSRC came in with a recommendation of an addition on the Cobourg hospital and the closing of the Port Hope one—one I totally disagreed with, lobbied and had turned around, thanks to the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, who understood the situation and was the Minister of Health at that time.

I mentioned the double cohort earlier, creating some 135,000 new post-secondary student spaces. What we've invested in is the largest expansion in the history of Ontario. The only one that kind of came close to that was back in the mid-1960s to late 1960s, when there was a tremendous expansion as it related then to the baby boomers who were moving through the system.

The throne speech has indicated more preferential choice as to where parents can send their students, to any school within that school board. This is something for which I've lobbied for a very long time. Why should you be sort of locked in? You don't have any choice to go to this teacher in this school. This is going to open that up. I think that's absolutely tremendous. It's similar to giving assistance to those who want to send their young people to an independent school.

We're committed to a tax credit, something for which I've lobbied for a very long time. I remember being on a school board and trying to arrange that some kids in an independent school would get a lift three or four miles down the road in empty seats, a bus that was only half-full. They were just moving down the road. They were stopping at both points anyway. But no, no way would the school board consider it. From then on I've been on a lobbying effort to ensure that what's right is done, and that's happening with the tax credit for independent schools.

There are so many more things that I could speak on in this throne speech. It was one with a theme. It's unfortunate the opposition couldn't follow that theme through, but maybe it should have been repeated several times so they would understand where the theme was and where it was coming from. I congratulate our Premier on putting together just one excellent throne speech. Thanks very much for the 20 minutes.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** I could hardly expect a Minister without Portfolio of the government to say less than congratulatory things about their own throne speech. Obviously government members are paid to pat themselves on the back and, fairly enough, opposition members are paid to criticize. That's the way our system works. Fair enough. But for anybody to suggest that this throne speech had any vision at all, I think, is a stretch of the greatest imagination. There was no support for that from any quarter—not within this Legislative Assembly but from out there—from any commentator that I've heard. You can be sure that if there was someone somewhere in any part of this province, government members and ministers would be standing up extolling the virtues of what some third party had to say positively about this throne speech. Fair enough. But I haven't heard one member of the government use one quote from anybody anywhere in the province of Ontario talking about a visionary throne speech. And there's a reason why: because it just wasn't there.

This was the bridal throne speech: something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. That's truly what it was, and that's fine. But if that's where Mr Eves and his government wish to lead the province of Ontario, I'm very happy to allow the people of Ontario the choice between real change, represented by Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals, or something old, something tired and something lacking in vision, represented by Mr Eves and the Conservative government.



**Mr Martin:** I just wanted to comment on the speech from the member for Northumberland. It was typical of him. Not much changes in the years that he's been here. He could probably open his desk at any particular point in time and take out a copy of a speech that he always gives, and gives with some relish and energy, I must say.

He talks about a theme. There certainly was a theme in the speech from the throne. Should he repeat it? No, he doesn't have to. They've been repeating it for eight years, and in my view it's been eight years of missed opportunity to really do something exciting, constructive and positive for the people of this province—to build communities, to invest in infrastructure, to develop an education system that would be second to none in the world, a health care system that will be there in a timely fashion for everybody.

But no, they chose not to do that. They literally spent billions of dollars—and I would suggest \$40 billion, \$50 billion, \$60 billion—over that period of time on tax breaks for people who really didn't need it, when in fact if they would have taken that money we could have all been so much better served in developing those communities and community supports and structures that we all need, count on and depend on.

But no, they missed that opportunity, and yes, they chose a theme: a theme of reducing government, of privatizing anything that is of any value that the private sector might have an interest in, and a theme of reducing expenditure on behalf of government on those things we all collectively know we need if we're going to have a quality of life that reflects the wealth that all of us participate in developing and generating in this province.

It's too bad. It's too bad that they continue to choose to make the choices that they do, because in the end it's going to hurt all of us for a long time to come, and it will be difficult for the next government to fix what they have broken.

1800

**Hon Mr Hardeman:** I want to thank you for the opportunity to say congratulations and a job well done to the member from Northumberland for such a good explanation of what was in the throne speech. I think anyone who would suggest that there wasn't a theme in the throne speech obviously either didn't listen to the Lieutenant Governor reading it or hasn't taken the opportunity to read it since.

Obviously, the throne speech was built on building a strong economy and creating more jobs so that we can afford to support the programs people in our society want and need to have the quality of life they have, such as health care, good education and protecting our environment. I think the member for Northumberland spoke to those, particularly starting with the number one priority for the people of Ontario, which of course is health care. He mentioned building two hospitals in his riding. I've been pretty elated that we are building a new hospital in Oxford county too, and we're very proud of that. I didn't realize there were some ridings that were getting two new hospitals in that time. But we're very happy and pleased

that the government is supporting the building of a new Woodstock General Hospital in Oxford county. Again, that can only be afforded because we have an economy which can support those services. That is the theme of the throne speech.

I also wanted to commend him for the work that he did on the Premier's task force on rural economic renewal. It relates to the throne speech because there was a section of the throne speech which spoke about investing \$1.6 billion in rural Ontario over the next number of years to build on the suggestions from that task force. I think it's very important to point that out—to build those rural communities people want and need in our province and which I think they have a right to expect. I think they expect those of us who represent rural Ontario to be here for them. He mentioned some of the recommendations in his report that talked about jump teams and the OSTAR RED, and we're doing all those things.

**Mr Levac:** The member from Northumberland was a little confused by my numbers, so I'll give it to him very simply: \$660 million, by the auditor's own book, was spent on consultants. The interesting fact is that three days after several of the employees of this government at this Legislature retired, they hired them right back and doubled their salaries. It's rather interesting that that type of money was being used to consult this government on how to run itself. Some \$660 million—\$75,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they're spending that kind of money. All I was asking is whether or not we could steal some of that hour's worth of consultants' fees to help with rural schools, brownfields, Laurier Brantford, BCI and call centres for our emergency service and our ambulance dispatch. We have so many problems out there that with that kind of money—I'm just asking if you would be wise enough to use some of that hour's worth of money to put back into things which are actually helping save lives. It's not that complicated.

The member from Don Valley East made it quite clear: we need to have somebody who understands what a vision means to go forward. Our Six Nations people tell us to think seven generations ahead. Whatever you do today, seven generations from now they'd better be able to respond to whatever it is you did. That's not going to happen with this type of vision they're saying they have.

Quite frankly, this is the one which always gets me. They always want to talk to us about the 225 tax cuts they've made, but they fail to add the second part of the sentence: 553 user fees. There have been 553 user fees since 1995 by this government, including the 225 tax cuts. It's a wash. We're not ahead. The individual is not ahead. Ask them on the street whether or not they're tremendously far ahead. They're not ahead. They're spending on 553 user fees.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The chief government whip, the minister without portfolio, the member for Northumberland has two minutes to respond.

**Hon Mr Galt:** I'd like to compliment the member from Oxford for his two-minute response. He was the

best one of the group by far. He really zeroed in on the debate and the comments that were made. He recognized the strong economy and that there was a theme in that throne speech. He recognized the fact that I had chaired the task force on rural economic renewal. He also commented on something I had forgotten to mention, and that was that \$750 million is to be invested over the next three years in water and sewer treatment plants here in the province of Ontario, particularly in rural Ontario.

Just as he was being cut off and was running out of his two minutes, he was talking about the resource jump teams to stimulate the economy in rural Ontario and how OSTAR RED is doing such a tremendous job. It was only thanks to our present Premier, when he was the Minister of Finance, that we put in the interim report and he came forward with some \$600 million for infrastructure and for rural economic development, that any of this could have happened.

I was mildly amused by the member from Don Valley East talking about "something old, something new," but

he didn't quite finish it, "something borrowed, something blue." It was obviously blue throughout that throne speech. You could see it to the right. It was true to our form. The vision was there. Even though they have missed that vision, it was there: stimulate the economy so we can afford the social programs. Unfortunately, they put it the other way around when they were in government: "We'll put in the social programs. Forget the cost. Forget how we're going to get the money. We'll run the programs anyway to keep everybody in Ontario happy. We'll be everything to everybody," and they certainly were. They should have finished out that "something borrowed, something blue." It would have completed that comment you were on to.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being well after 6, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. That's May 8 in the year 2003.

*The House adjourned at 1806.*



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Assemblée législative  
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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 8 May 2003

Jeudi 8 mai 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 mai 2003

*The House met at 1000.*

*Prayers.*

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### IMMIGRATION

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I move that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should enter into discussions with the federal government forthwith pursuant to which responsibility for immigration matters pertaining to the province of Ontario would be transferred to the government of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Mr Tascona has moved ballot item number 3. He now has 10 minutes to present his resolution.

**Mr Tascona:** I'm very pleased to begin the debate with respect to the resolution. I want to start by quoting a history article I've received, *The Long Road to Canadian Diversity*, written by Luca Codignola. It's in the magazine, *Partners: Italy & Canada*. I want to start by speaking to that because my father's family originally immigrated to Canada in 1907. In fact, it was the first Italian family in the city of Winnipeg at that time.

I want to quote this article, which is at page 11:

"While growing from" 11 million "in 1941 to over 31 million in the year 2001, and in spite of the leadership of Prime Ministers of apparently conflicting views, post-war Canada has continued to profit from de facto choice immigration (between 1950 and 1970, Canada welcomed over 430,000 Italians), its proximity to the United States and its traditional British and Commonwealth heritage. Meanwhile, it has maintained certain features that are uniquely 'Canadian': a great regional diversity together with provincial powers that have been steadily growing since Confederation. Bilingualism (English and French), a law since 1969 and more than a simple federal ... obligation is now seen as an asset by most educated persons."

Immigration for this country has been very successful. The point I'm making today with respect to my resolution deals with the failure of the federal government to provide appropriate screening at airports and the recent report by the federal Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, detailing the inability of the federal government to manage the country's customs and immigration. That's the catalyst for my private member's resolution in the Legislature today.

Ontario's economic prosperity has been and continues to be strengthened by the immigration of skilled workers,

professionals and their families, all in search of a better life. The quality of life for all Ontarians is enriched by an immigration system which properly screens, selects and enforces the law.

The federal Auditor General's report clearly indicates there is a growing number of people who are still in Canada despite Citizenship and Immigration Canada's having directly removed them from the country. Fraser notes that this gap has increased to approximately 36,000 over the last six years. According to Fraser's news release, "Enforcement activities should be given higher priority. The growing backlog of removals undermines the system used to admit people to Canada."

Other findings from the federal Auditor General's April 2000 report indicate the following; this is her critique of the Department of Immigration: "Immigration officers are present at only 44 of the 272 staffed ports of entry and most of those 44 ports are not staffed 24 hours a day by immigration officers. Ports of entry where no immigration officer is present handle about 15% of the total traffic."

As of 2000, Citizenship and Immigration Canada "estimated that close to 60% of all refugee claimants arrive with no documents or with false documents...."

"Facilities in the Ontario region reached capacity several times over the last few years and officers were instructed to choose people for detention carefully and consider alternatives to detention."

I also want to point to the recent SARS crisis in Toronto as another dramatic failure of federal officials. There is no doubt that the federal government's decision to play down the threat of SARS and refusal to properly screen arrivals to Canada was a primary cause of the WHO travel advisory and the economic damage that ensued.

I want to quote the *Toronto Star* with respect to the federal actions. This is an article from April 30:

"Ottawa Failed to Heed Ontario's SARS Plea."

"Health Minister Anne McLellan was warned by her Ontario counterpart almost a month ago about inadequacies in the way the federal government was screening travellers for SARS."

"Ms McLellan, who has been accused of not doing enough to tackle the SARS outbreak, replied to the letter from Ontario Health Minister Tony Clement by insisting the federal government was taking reasonable and appropriate precautionary measures related to inbound and outbound air passengers."

"Two weeks after her reply, the World Health Organization issued an advisory against travelling to Toronto,

noting that some SARS cases in other countries appeared to have been exported from Canada.

"The WHO is removing the advisory today after Canadian authorities agreed to improve screening procedures, which until now have consisted mainly of putting cards in airports advising passengers who pick them up of SARS symptoms. Most people were permitted to enter and exit the country without getting any information, either verbal or written, about SARS." The title of this article is "Ottawa Failed to Heed Ontario's SARS Plea."

We also have an article from the *Globe and Mail* of May 1, "McLellan Fends Off Calls to Quit."

It says, "In his letter, obtained by the *Globe and Mail*, Mr Clement," the Minister of Health for Ontario, "expressed concern that incoming passengers, particularly from SARS hot spots travelling to Canada through the United States, might be missed. He also asked Ms McLellan to keep him abreast of any disaster planning the government was doing, and urged her to make sure there were enough staff at Pearson International Airport and border crossings.

"The World Health Organization slapped a travel advisory on Toronto three weeks after the letter," from Minister Clement, "warning people to avoid non-essential trips to the city."

Also, in the *National Post* of May 1, 2003, an article says, "Did Ottawa fumble its response to the outbreak of SARS in Toronto? Anne McLellan, the federal Minister of Health, says no. On Monday, she claimed Ottawa is doing its bit to make sure SARS is being 'controlled and contained.' One day later, Jim Flaherty, Ontario's Minister of Enterprise, contradicted her. Ottawa, he said, failed to provide the sort of 'significant reassurance' that would have demonstrated it was taking SARS seriously—and possibly forestalled the infamous WHO travel advisory. Mr Flaherty zeroed in on Ottawa's lackadaisical approach to screening for SARS at Toronto's Pearson International Airport as the worst example of this." In a quote in this article, they say Mr Flaherty "is absolutely correct."

1010

The resolution put forward by myself today would see the federal government give responsibility for customs and immigration matters pertaining to the province to the Ontario government. The resolution would allow the province and the federal government to negotiate the transfer in the best interests of public safety and public accountability. That's what this resolution is about.

The province of Quebec has responsibility for these matters already. They have an agreement with the federal government with respect to shared costs and with respect to dealing with immigration in their particular province. This is not something that is not done elsewhere in this country.

I want to go back to the federal auditor's report. It's the report of the Auditor General to the House of Commons, chapter 5, on Citizenship and Immigration Canada, control and enforcement. This is a scathing report of the

federal government with respect to how they are dealing with our immigration matters. It says at page 29:

"Enforcement activities are under increasing stress and are falling behind. The gap between removal orders and confirmed removals is increasing. Detention budgets and facilities are a departmental concern. The growing backlog in enforcement activities places the integrity of a major part of the immigration program at risk....

"Our examination at ports of entry found problems that have been present for several years. The department does not currently know how well the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is performing its immigration-related duties, nor how well Immigration's secondary examination process is working. Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency need an updated agreement that includes performance standards and a way to evaluate and measure performance."

I want to repeat that. This is 5.119, page 29, chapter 5 of the federal auditor's report. They say, "The department does not currently know how well the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is performing its immigration-related duties, nor how well Immigration's secondary examination process is working."

That is not acceptable to the citizens of Canada. It's not acceptable for the province of Ontario with respect to the public health and the public security of this province. It's not proper for the Minister of Health for the federal government to wave off a letter from the Minister of Health for this province with respect to our concerns. It's very clear why the WHO removed its travel advisory when they were promised that there would be screening done at Pearson International Airport. That screening just started today, with respect to that.

I would say that we have a serious problem in this province with respect to the federal government's approach to immigration and customs and it has to be dealt with, like the province of Quebec is dealing with it today. They've taken responsibility. We should do so also.

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is open for debate.

**Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's):** I came into the room, I think maybe like a number of people, very interested in this particular resolution because it touches upon a number of issues that are of great concern to all members, certainly to Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals.

In particular, I was interested to see whether or not we were here to talk about how Ontario might exercise its concurrent constitutional powers over immigration. The province of Ontario obviously receives a vast number of new Canadians. Last year, 60% of all newcomers to Canada settled in Toronto. I would hope that, if we are going to continue with a serious debate on this, we would recognize that the city of Toronto has got to be involved in this particular debate, because the city of Toronto is so impacted by any changes to our immigration laws and rules. It's interesting that the greater Toronto area is larger in population than any other province in the country next to Quebec and the rest of Ontario. It's larger



than British Columbia, larger than Alberta, larger than any other province, and yet of course it plays no role whatsoever in any such constitutional changes or issues, which is what's being addressed here.

Other provinces do have agreements with the federal government in terms of particular issues that affect immigration. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Alberta have all dealt with particular issues, including specific labour market needs. We're quite interested in that too. I can tell you that, particularly when it comes to foreign-trained professionals who are currently being shut out of many industries in the midst of our labour shortage, one of our commitments for a number of years now has been that we have to address that and get the regulating, or if not, get the Legislature working to address that.

But that's not what I heard from the member's comments today. It wasn't about those issues, and there are a lot of other issues that come with taking over this concurrent power. Our jobs would change substantially, and everybody, I would hope, knows that a big part of what an MPP's office does is to deal with this. Amongst other things, you'd have to dramatically change the set up of MPP's offices, budget and otherwise.

The resolution does state that the province of Ontario take over responsibility for immigration matters. It does not say some; it doesn't say all. I'd be interested to hear from the member, maybe in his comments, whether he's talking about everything, because everything would be quite a change and not necessarily in the public interest. But on the other hand, the government of Ontario has, for the last eight years, obviously not expressed any interest in these changes, so there must be a reason for that. Perhaps we can hear from the government on that front.

If the member wants to have a debate about who did what right and wrong in SARS, we have been having that debate for many days. If the member wants to talk about a change to the responsibility over airports, that's a bit of a different matter, isn't it? As the member, who's a lawyer, knows, the responsibility for airports falling under the federal government comes not just for immigration but also, under the Constitution Act, section 91, sub 10, Minister Collenette, for example, has responsibility over airports because that is a federal responsibility. It's not just customs. So if the member is interested in taking over airports as well, the budget is getting bigger here.

Interesting, not impossible; there are areas where the provincial government works with, or takes over, federal areas for particular reasons, maybe health reasons, and can do so. Sometimes it gets fought out in the courts, but by and large, if provinces want to take over responsibilities, then they should.

We, on this side of the House, are interested in this debate and this discussion, particularly as it relates to the workforce in Ontario and as it relates to economic issues and public safety issues in Ontario. But if this debate is going to be about who did what right and when, who ought to have been golfing or not golfing in Arizona,

then we can have that debate. I hope that the spirit of this doesn't turn into a debate that ought to take place in the federal Parliament, but rather one that deals with the serious provincial issues that have come to the fore that we talked about in our Opposition Day motion yesterday. I look forward to seeing whether this is just going to be fed-bashing or whether this is a serious discussion about changes to the responsibilities of the province of Ontario when it comes to new Canadians and airports.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** It is a delight to stand up here and to speak to this issue, having spent so much of my life speaking to this issue on many occasions. For members of the House who may not be aware, for 20 years or more before becoming an elected member, I served as counsel to the Minister of Immigration. In fact, I wrote some of those laws in Ottawa; I enforced the act through the Immigration and Refugee Board at ports of entry and much of what member Tascona had to speak about today.

I will tell you that I came here to speak in favour of his motion but I'm somewhat troubled by the tone with which he speaks. With the greatest of respect, he is attempting to enter areas of total federal jurisdiction.

It's quite clear that the provinces have a role in immigration, and it is quite clear, in my view, that that should be exercised. I go back to where the province gets that jurisdiction. It's Section 95 of the British North America Act, which is still extant, and I'd like to read that into the record.

Section 95 of the British North America Act reads:

"In each province the Legislature may make laws in relation to agriculture in the province, and to immigration into the province; and it is hereby declared that the Parliament of Canada may from time to time make laws in relation to agriculture in all or any of the provinces, and to immigration into all or any of the provinces; and any law of the Legislature of a province relative to agriculture or to immigration shall have effect in and for the province as long and as far as it is not repugnant to any act of the Parliament of Canada."

1020

It's quite clear that when this was written it was the intent that the provinces would have a say in agriculture and immigration but that the federal law would pre-dominate, and where they were in opposition the federal law would be the one that went forward.

In this province, since 1867, we have always had an agricultural minister and no one would have thought for a moment that we should not have an agricultural minister, either in this province or federally. In fact, to this day we have them and they co-operate and they come together and they make rules related to agriculture. But this province has never taken the opportunity of exercising the second option, which is for immigration.

In the days of 1867, most people lived on farms and agriculture was a very large component of the economic lifeblood of this province. It has declined, unfortunately, and continues to decline as people leave the farms and we get into agribusiness, to the point that immigration is



by far the more important of the two roles that can be jointly exercised today.

I would suggest that a number of other things have happened which make this particular resolution timely. The immigration classes have changed. In the 1950s and 1960s and even up until the late 1980s, those who entered Canada came primarily in the family class and from sponsored and dependent relatives. I know, because I processed some of those applications for a time. Those people came and they were looked after by the relatives who sent for them and who signed for them to make sure they would not become public charges; by the relatives who went out and found them work, and by the relatives who made sure that if they fell into tough economic times they did not go on welfare.

Those times have changed. They slowly started to change in the 1980s and then rapidly started to change in the 1990s. Today, the majority of immigrants do not fall within the family class. The dependent relatives class has been obliterated; it is no longer part of the legislation, and today the majority of people come in the independent category. With respect, it is because they come within the independent category that, more than ever, the province, and particularly the province of Ontario, has to have a say.

Today, people come from all around the world. Up until the 1950s and 1960s, they came primarily from Europe and from the United States, which were the feeder countries. Today, quite literally, they come from all of the 180 countries around the world, and they come here expecting that they are going to be treated very well. They come here expecting that this is a land of opportunity—which it is; that Ontario is a province of opportunity—which it is.

When they come here, I will tell you that many of them are disappointed. They are disappointed because Ontario has never done what it is supposed to do, and that is, be involved in the selection process, and has never really exercised what it needs to do, and that is, to recognize the skills that have been obtained in foreign lands and to use those skills in a way that will benefit not only the people who come here with them, but will benefit the broader Canadian and Ontario community. We have failed to do that, with respect. We have failed to do that, and what this bill could do, if it wasn't about fed-bashing, is plug that hole.

I go back to the province of Quebec. The province of Quebec in 1978 established an act related to immigration in that province, and that act has been changed some 15 times in that period. It was at first a fairly small act, an act that established a grid so that people could be chosen with criteria that were not those on which immigrants were chosen for the rest of Canada, but gave particular points and incentives for people who were able to speak Canada's two official languages, particularly the French language. It gave particular points because that province was looking for professors and teachers and engineers and doctors and nurses who were able to converse in French. It has been, I would suggest, very successful.

The act today is a much better act than it was in 1978 when I first started to work on it and with it in Ottawa. Today the act contains a number of things which I think this province should emulate. It contains provisions that allow for the selection of immigrants, as it has always done, but it has broadened out today to include integration, how applications are made abroad, work permits for people who need to come into the country for a very short period of time, and financial assistance to allow new immigrants to choose Quebec as a place to live and to work. So Quebec is the chosen designation as opposed to Ontario or British Columbia or other places immigrants might naturally tend to want to go to. Quebec has been very successful in its application of the law.

What Quebec has not chosen to do is what the member opposite suggested in his opening statement. They have not chosen to go into the enforcement field because quite literally, and with respect, they cannot. The enforcement field has always and will always continue to be a field that is under federal jurisdiction, and indeed it must be. How do you deport a person from one province who may not be deportable in another? The law has to be the same. The law has to be dealt with the same and the enforcement aspects of who gets into Canada at a port of entry or who is forced to leave after they are here if they run afoul of the Immigration Act must be the same in each and every jurisdiction. If it is not, one could merely move from one jurisdiction to another or fly into one jurisdiction or another or cross the border at one jurisdiction or another and have different applicable laws as to who is admissible and who is not. With the mobility requirements of the charter, this is an impossibility of which the member speaks.

I am supporting the motion, notwithstanding that I think he has started on the wrong tenet. I am supporting it because it is a good resolution. We see other provinces that have got into the immigration game as well, such as Manitoba. Manitoba has done many of the same things, and the city of Winnipeg today is a thriving community because people are coming from all around the world with the skills that Manitobans want. Manitoba has set out the welcome mat. Manitoba has assessed the people who are coming in for their foreign experience. They have worked hand in hand with industry, particularly in Winnipeg, to bring in skilled workers to make sure that the development of that province proceeds ahead. We would like to emulate, and believe that we should emulate, what is being done in Manitoba.

In fact, Ontario is the only province of the 10 in Canada that has not signed an immigration accord with Ottawa. Ontario, which is the province most immigrants come to, has not signed the accord. Because we have not signed the accord, the monies that flow here for immigration settlement are less—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Prue:** I'm going to listen to you. I think I know what I'm talking about a good deal more than you do on this topic.

They have not signed the accord. That has to be the first thing that we do: we need to sign the accord as a



province. Having signed the accord, we need to do what Quebec has done; particularly, we need to do it in three fields. The first is in the selection. We need to be there when we are choosing immigrants from around the world. We need to choose the professionals we need in this province. If we need doctors or nurses or nurse practitioners or if we need atomic scientists or if we need people in particular fields in this province to help Ontario grow, then we should be there to choose them and to make sure that their transit to Canada and their coming into the general workforce is done in a seamless manner. That is why we need to be in the selection process.

We need to be in the application process as well. We need to do the assessments overseas, and that will involve a great deal of money, I hope the members realize. You have to send the equivalent of visa officers to posts around the world to choose those immigrants. But having chosen them, we have a golden opportunity to provide them guidance. We have a golden opportunity to choose, once we have chosen them, to tell them what upgradings they are going to need in the period they have to wait for their immigrant visa before they come to Canada. We have an opportunity to tell them that we will accept their qualifications if they take an additional three- or four-month or six-month or a year's course in Canada to upgrade their skills to meet Canadian standards. People will have an opportunity to determine at that point whether they want to choose Canada and choose Ontario, and we will be better off for it because when they get here they can immediately use those skills. We have an opportunity for those who come to Ontario to integrate them through English as a second language, through retraining, through job searches, things that we need to do in this province for new immigrant populations.

1030

What we do not need to do, with respect, is get into the whole argument about whether our borders are being properly enforced, whether the Immigration and Refugee Board, or whatever it's going to morph into in its newest iteration, is doing a proper job. Of course there needs to be more money spent federally; of course there does. Having worked there myself for more than 20 years, I will tell you there were never enough immigration officers; there was never enough enforcement. And I will tell the members opposite, the very worst minister we ever had was Flora MacDonald, who opened up most of this stuff and made a mess of it. If you really want to know when it became a mess, it was in the time of Brian Mulroney.

What we should not get into is the whole argument about SARS, because if you work at Pearson airport, as I once did, you will know that the whole issue of health is handled by an official of Health Canada and by a doctor who is on duty at international airports. That doctor does not work for immigration and customs; that doctor works for health, and anyone who is deemed to be sick is referred on primary inspection.

The whole issue about customs: customs is a total federal responsibility; it is not a shared jurisdiction. The

customs officers at ports of entry belong to the revenue department and not to the immigration department.

When you're looking at the issue of refugees, which is contained within the Immigration Act, it is a United Nations convention to which Canada is a signatory nation, having signed as one of the earliest nations in 1951. We are also a signatory nation to the protocol signed in New York in 1967. The protocol signed in 1967 involved Canada, not the provinces of Canada. It is Canada that is responsible for determining which persons are refugees, how the hearings are held and what rights of appeal they have, not the provinces.

Last but not least, the enforcement aspect is entirely within federal jurisdiction. I explained that earlier. If the removal is to take place, it cannot be a removal from one province to another; it cannot be a removal which is predicated on different standards. It must be a removal from the country. If people are inadmissible, the same thing holds true: the inadmissibility must be Canada-wide, not province-wide.

Having said that, I commend the member for bringing this forward. It is high time that Ontario got into the immigration game. It is vital to the security of this province, but what is more important, it is vital to the economy of this province. If Ontario is going to continue to lag behind the other provinces, if Ontario is not going to seize what is rightfully theirs, which Quebec so long ago, in 1978, realized was important to them, to their culture and to their economy, then I think we in this province are going to be the losers. It will cost money, but it is important and it would be the right thing by the people who choose Ontario and the people who choose Toronto as a good place to live.

Mr Speaker, we will be supporting the motion.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** I'm quite pleased to be able to rise and speak to this resolution. For the members opposite, especially the one from Beaches-East York who just spoke, and also the member from St Paul's who spoke, I don't believe the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford was doing any fed-bashing. I think his resolution is quite clear. He says, "In the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should enter into discussions with the federal government forthwith pursuant to which responsibility for immigration matters pertaining to the province of Ontario would be transferred to the government of Ontario."

It's not a matter of fed-bashing. In his speech, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford used sections of the Auditor General's report to justify why he felt a review is necessary and why we should enter into negotiations. He stated, for example, that there were 36,000 immigrants who had been ordered deported from the country—deported from the country, I should say—over the course of the last six years that the government had lost touch with. They lost touch with 36,000 people whom they had ordered deported.

If you look at this in actual years, in 1997, removal orders were issued for over 14,000; only 8,000 were actually deported. There are similar figures in 1998 and

1999. In 2000, the figures actually improved somewhat in that more than 12,000 were ordered deported and nearly 9,000 were in fact deported. But in 2001 and 2002, the figures seriously reversed themselves. In 2001, nearly 18,000 people were ordered deported from the country and only 9,000 were in fact deported. In 2002, 14,000 were ordered deported, and only 8,000 were removed from the country. That is the source of the member's concern.

In addition, and this is very serious, he pointed out the Auditor General's statement that "Immigration officers are present at only 44 of the 272 staffed ports of entry." Only 44 of 272 ports of entry have an immigration officer. And of these 44 ports, most are not staffed 24 hours a day. That is very, very serious.

What is important to me as a member of a riding in a community that receives the fourth-largest number of immigrants in all of Canada—I'm not talking percentages of immigrants; I'm talking numbers of immigrants who make major contributions to our community and to our province and to our county—when something takes place like September 11, many of the Sikhs or Muslims who are making major contributions to our community are tarred with a brush and suffer major racial prejudice as a result of the attacks on the federal government's failure to monitor its immigration system properly. These people should not be tarred with that brush, and wouldn't be tarred with that brush if our government was monitoring its immigration system. That is why the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has suggested that Ontario should take a greater part, should sit down and negotiate with the federal government on how we can screen, how we can enforce the immigration process in this country.

The member for St Paul's said that the number of immigrants to Toronto constitutes 60% of all immigrants to this country. That's true. I'm sure he feels, like I do, that they are making a major contribution to this province and to this community.

And then we have the member for Beaches-East York, the posh Beaches area, suggesting that perhaps we should put restrictions on foreign-trained professionals.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** You said that. You said we should put restrictions on them, that we should monitor the skills that are needed in this province and in this country before we bring them in. You said that. I don't agree with that.

**Mr Prue:** You don't know what you're talking about.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** You already said that earlier. You said that you knew far more about this issue than anybody else in here. I don't think you do.

**The Acting Speaker:** Through the Speaker, please.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you, Speaker, I appreciate that.

We talked about the immigrant settlement allowance. The member for Beaches-East York said that Ontario was the only province in the country that hadn't signed the immigration settlement agreement. There are very good reasons for that. That is, the federal government wasn't offering us what it offered the other provinces.

It's very simple: they offered—and agreed to—the province of Quebec four times what they were willing to offer Ontario. That, of course, is not odd, because in the area of tourism—which is slightly off topic, I agree—the federal government offers Quebec, gives Quebec, eight times what it gives Ontario in tourism-events planning. So that's not out of the ordinary.

Even more important, of course, was the issue of SARS. The federal government was not doing proper screening. The World Health Organization stated this. The only condition on which the World Health Organization withdrew its travel advisory to the city of Toronto was that the federal government would properly implement a screening procedure, which is something that wasn't being done.

I do say that I will support the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford in this resolution. His motives are very noble.

**1040**

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** When I came in this morning, I guess I was anxious to hear from the government member what the rationale for this bill was. I can tell you that from listening to the debate this morning I'm quite disturbed as to what this is all about. It sounds innocent on the surface. When you look at what they have said, though, more than what's in this resolution, this has been about SARS, it has been about screening processes and it has been about September 11. Let me suggest to you that I believe this resolution here today is dangerous, in view of the way it has been put by the government members. To try to somehow exploit the SARS tragedy and link it to immigration—we're talking about screening processes here. We're talking about Canadian citizens who have travelled overseas and come back; Canadian citizens leaving the country and coming into the country. To somehow link SARS to an immigration policy is outrageous, disturbing and, in my view, exploiting a tragedy in this province.

They talk about screening processes. What does that have to do with a Canadian citizen travelling somewhere else and coming back into Canada and not being properly screened? What does that have to do with immigration?

The cap of all of this is the quotation from the member from Brampton Centre: "We should at least be more careful about the kind of immigration that comes in.... I think we should look at it closely, yes, absolutely, because of SARS and because of anything else we ... run the risk of incurring."

What an ignorant comment. What an ignorant comment from a son of an immigrant. I'm lucky, and most of us in this room and across the province are lucky, that there was no law that decided the type of immigrants that would come into Canada and Ontario. It is disgusting.

**Mr Tascona:** Mr Speaker, I want that comment removed from the record.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would the member for Hamilton East take his seat, please. Which comment?

*Interjection:* All of them.



**Mr Tascona:** "Ignorant comment from a son of an immigrant."

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm sorry, I don't see, in that context, where that word is unparliamentary. Please take your seat. The member will continue.

**Mr Agostino:** I'm upsetting the member because I'm breaking his little code words that he has put in this resolution here.

To do it in the context in which it has been done, to do it in the context of the comments from the member for Brampton Centre, and to somehow put this as some benign immigration policy is an insult to the millions of immigrants in this province.

**Mr Tascona:** You're an insult.

**Mr Agostino:** What are the right types of immigrants? You tell me what the right types of immigrants to Ontario are, sir. Maybe when you get your chance, you'll tell me what the right type of immigrants are. To link the SARS outbreak to an immigration issue, to somehow suggest that if you come from a certain country you're to blame for what's happened here in Ontario, is disgusting.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** You're an apologist.

**Mr Agostino:** I'm angered. No, I'm an apologist for your comments, sir. What your member has said—and no one has distanced himself from that—in this policy today, in my view, is an insult to all Ontarians who have come here from other countries.

This is simply a code word to try to blame others for what has happened in Ontario, to try to blame people who come from other countries, who have different skin colour or a different religion for SARS and September 11, as has been mentioned. I'm angry. I think many Ontarians are going to be angered by this. This is not some feel-good policy to control immigration and make Ontario a better place. This is to choose who comes into Ontario. This is to somehow link immigration with the fact that the federal government may have failed in their screening process at Pearson airport. To somehow link the failure of the federal government to properly screen people who have come into this country, maybe Canadian citizens coming back, to an immigration policy is absurd, to say the least.

I cannot, in any way, shape or form, agree with this. I realize the members are getting a little rattled over there, and I appreciate their uncomfortableness with having what this is all about exposed. The reality is that the immigration policy in this country, despite its flaws, has worked well over the years.

The member talks about the number of illegal immigrants or people who haven't left the country. Yes, that's a problem. He refers to 36,000. Ideally there should be none. These same members who wrap themselves in the American flag every chance they get should realize there are over 350,000 illegal immigrants in the United States of America today. Despite their crackdown, despite their anti-immigrant stance, there are still over 350,000 illegal immigrants in the United States of America. As they wrap themselves in the American flag every chance they get, they should remember that.

I cannot, under any circumstance, support this type of bill—a bill that, in my view, is anti-immigration; a bill that, in my view, is set up to screen the type of people who come into Ontario; a bill that, in my view, exploits the SARS tragedy, somehow blaming it on certain people from certain countries.

The breakdowns that have occurred should be fixed, but to somehow suggest that they are linked to the immigration policy of the federal government and that Ontario controlling this would somehow fix it is absurd. In my view, it's an insult to every immigrant who has ever set foot in this province, in this country. There is no way that I could ever support this type of biased policy; it goes against the grain of everything we believe in this province and against the intent and grain of every immigrant who has ever come to Ontario.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, right now.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I'd like to bring things back to sort of a normal pitch, if I may, respectfully. I want to start by reading the member for Barry-Simcoe-Bradford's resolution, which we're discussing, and clarify some of the weak and very spurious information that was presented just a few moments ago.

"In the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should enter into discussions with the federal government forthwith pursuant to which responsibility for immigration matters pertaining to the province of Ontario would be transferred to the government of Ontario."

I think that's a reasonable request. There are certain suggestions—I think there are really three aspects to the immigration process: the selection process first, the screening and the enforcement. I think it's really on the latter, the enforcement part, where the federal government has to some extent, and more recently, fallen down.

This isn't a comment made by this government as much as it is a comment made by the federal Auditor General. With your indulgence, I would like to read, for the record, some of the comments she made. I think she was trying to say to us that the issue of enforcement has shown up more recently under the SARS initiative. It's for the public's safety. All Ontarians, indeed all Canadians, need to be reassured and have some confidence that the federal government is exercising due diligence and taking public safety seriously. The Auditor General said here in her report for April, 2003—and I just want to repeat these for the record. It's from page 24 of her report. "During the past six years, the department"—that is the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada—"has removed an average of about 8,400 persons per year." There's a schedule here to exhibit that. "In 2002, some 8,100 persons were removed from the country." The point she's making here is, "The gap between removal orders and confirmed removals has grown by about 36,000 in the past six years." That really implies that the court or some process, some legally constituted process, has determined that there's a number of removal orders—these are people who are here illegally who should be removed—and that list is grow-

ing. The chart shows very clearly that that list, the removal orders, is growing faster than the orders to remove. In other words, they're not actually practising due diligence and dealing with the enforcement matters.

1050

It's even more alarming, actually. All Ontarians, indeed all Canadians, need to understand this is the fundamental issue that I think, respectfully, Quebec has used to their advantage by taking a more proactive position on the three phases that I mentioned earlier.

This is the second alarm bell on page 16 of the auditor's report on Citizenship and Immigration, in section 5.56. It says, "Immigration officers are present at only 44 of the 272 staffed ports of entry and most of those 44," of the 272, "are not staffed 24 hours a day by immigration officers." Those persons who illegally want into the country or abuse the privilege of living in Canada—this information would be on the Web site, as is appropriate. So guess where they would be coming in? At the most vulnerable spots.

It's those few people who spoil it for the vast majority, and when I say the vast majority, as I look around the House, I see even our Minister of Citizenship, who is here listening today—he's also, by the way, the provincial minister who would be responsible, the senior person on the lead file of immigration provincially; he has a Portuguese background. In fact, if I look at myself—I always look in the mirror—I have an Irish background. If I look at Mr Tascona, he has an Italian background. The previous speaker, Mr Wettlaufer, I believe has a German background. I'm looking around me and almost every person—Mr Mazzilli is here this morning; he's Italian. Almost all the members here very much reflect the collage of different cultures and nationalities, and religions, for that matter, that make up this great province. This in no way has, nor would I want anyone to imply that this has, any tone of intolerance to it, because I would not stand here and support any resolution on any side that had any tone of intolerance.

There will be those who will draw political fire to it and potentially—the Liberal members like to think they have ownership. But if I look at the comments made by the Auditor General—and more recently, by Sheila Copps, the federal minister who is in the leadership thing, she has brought up that Anne McLellan isn't properly executing her responsibilities. The member for Hamilton East used to work for Sheila Copps, so I think he comes to this without a clear, objective position.

If you're going back to the premise of Mr Tascona's resolution here, it's for the collective safety that governments are responsible for, in the case of West Nile virus, in the case of SARS, in the case of persons who constitute a threat. The province is responsible for the issue of public safety, and in that respect I support this. Any suggestion of tampering with the selection process, the screening process, I have very serious reservations that it could be misconstrued. What this is to me, in summary, is a respect for process, respect for people, respect for the responsibilities that governments are required to execute and carry out on behalf of the people who elect them.

It would appear, from what the Auditor General has said and the comments here this morning, that that respect has been threatened and the execution of those responsibilities is at risk. It's in that context that I respect and support Mr Tascona's intent to have the province meet forthwith and discuss with the federal government responsibilities for immigration matters that pertain to the province of Ontario. In that context, I am supportive of the resolution.

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** I'm here today basically to express my outrage at this cheap attempt by the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and his Conservative colleagues to exploit a most tragic health situation that occurred in Ontario, the SARS outbreak, and equate it to basic problems, supposedly, as they've said, with immigration. They have talked about immigration as a problem, illegal immigrants—the member from Oshawa just stood up—they've talked about September 11, all in this resolution about immigration now being taken over by Ontario. The people of Ontario are much smarter than you. They know what you're up to. They know what your intent is. Your intent is to basically say that if we control these immigrants, we're going to solve these problems.

The SARS outbreak was not about an immigration problem or about the immigrants. SARS was a health problem. It was a government problem. It was not about these people from different countries who have built this country, built this province with their blood, sweat and tears. For you, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, to say it's their fault that we've got SARS is an abomination, and you should resign your seat for blaming that on immigrants.

As an immigrant myself, I've seen for too long how you Conservatives patronize new Canadians. Why don't you have a resolution celebrating the great contributions immigrants have made to Ontario? Instead, you come here trying to slag them and blame them for problems like SARS. That's what you're trying to do. You're trying to speak to the extreme right-wing radicals in your party who like beating up on new Canadians. That's what you're trying to do.

The people of Ontario can see through this phony resolution because immigrants have come here, worked and raised families. One of the reasons Ontario's so prosperous is because new immigrants have bought cars and houses. Ninety-nine per cent of new immigrants work and are law-abiding. They don't cause any problems. Yet, we have a resolution here today trying to exploit this horrific tragedy of SARS, saying that if we do something about immigrants, if we stop them at the airport, if the feds start stopping them at the airport, then we won't have these problems.

We know what they're getting at. Thankfully, the people of Ontario have moved beyond blaming things on groups. That's what you're doing. You're blaming these groups of immigrants. If the feds step on them, screen them and put them in jail, then this problem will be eliminated.



This is an amazing indictment against the Conservative Party and all of you members who stand up here at this time of great provincial and city danger in terms of health. We have to come together as a community and say this is not about the Chinese, Italian, Portuguese or Sri Lankan communities. This is about all the citizens of Ontario solving a problem of health. It's a health issue that we've got to solve. Instead, you've done the worst thing possible.

The member from Barrie should be ashamed of himself for trying to exploit this issue of health and blaming it on immigrants. You should withdraw this resolution. You should be condemned for trying to exploit this for your political advantage. It's a shameful resolution that nobody should support.

**The Acting Speaker:** I believe all party time has expired in terms of the caucuses. Therefore, Mr Tascona now has up to two minutes for closing remarks.

**Mr Tascona:** I'm very pleased to close out this debate. Certainly the province has a role in the immigration system constitutionally, as pointed out by the MPP for Beaches-East York. The resolution I have put forth today speaks to exercising that provincial role, which we constitutionally have the right to do. It's vital to our economy and to the security of this province. Yes, we've entered a new world since 9/11. That's a fact. But the fact also is that the federal Auditor General is not satisfied with the enforcement of the immigration system.

What I'm speaking about today is dealing with proper selection, proper screening. That's something the province of Quebec is doing right now. That's their constitutional right. They negotiated with the federal government. I think the member from St Paul's pointed out that other provinces—he mentioned Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Alberta—have gone into specific issues with respect to immigration. Why can't we? Why can't we stand up here today and say that we want to have a role like other provinces? What's wrong with that? That's all my resolution speaks to.

1100

This province has a role to play. This resolution says, "Start exercising that role." That's what other provinces are doing. Public security and the public health of this province are the responsibilities of this province. The federal government makes the rules with respect to criminal activity, and we enforce those. We have that role.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. This is not going to get out of hand; I'm telling you right now.

## GRIDLOCK

**Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora):** I move that in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should adopt Dalton McGuinty's Growing Strong Communities platform to tackle gridlock by dedi-

cating two cents of the existing gas tax to municipalities to use for transit, and by creating the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority and giving it the resources and mandate to repair the damage from years of neglect by:

Putting more GO trains on existing lines;

Expanding GO parking;

New vehicles for the TTC;

Removing highway bottlenecks;

Establishing a seamless integrated ticket system allowing users to move across the GTA region with a single ticket.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):**

Mr Sorbara has moved private member's resolution number 4. The member for Vaughan-King-Aurora now has up to 10 minutes to present the arguments for his resolution.

**Mr Sorbara:** Sooner or later Ernie Eves, the Premier of Ontario, is going to have the courage to call an election. That may come later on this month. He said it might come in September. He said it might come next year. Voters all across—

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Just be ready.

**Mr Sorbara:** My friend says, "Just be ready." There is no doubt, sir, that we're ready.

I think the marvellous thing about elections is that the population of the province has an opportunity to examine the record of the incumbent government, in this case the Harris-Eves government. I think when that examination takes place, overwhelmingly the theme will be this: that during the course of eight years, when the economy of Ontario was growing and expanding rapidly, the great tragedy in Ontario was that public services of every variety fell into disrepair.

That certainly has been the case in education.

That certainly has been the case in health care, and we see that most recently in the case of the quality of public health care in the province of Ontario.

That certainly has been the case in our public services that deal with environmental protection.

I submit to you today—and it's the basis of this resolution—that that is most assuredly the case when it comes to managing transportation systems, the public responsibility to do that, and certainly in the greater Toronto area.

In my two years back in this House representing the people of Vaughan-King-Aurora, I hear on a daily basis how angry people are about the fact that over the course of the past eight years, nothing has been done to improve public transportation throughout the GTA.

You hear it every day. Let me just give you an example of what I'm talking about. Back in 1989, I was part of a government that made a commitment to expand the Toronto subway system along University Avenue up to York University. It was approved by cabinet, the funding was there, we were going to go ahead with it. It has never been done.

Right across the GTA, we've had expansions of close to 100,000 people and more. What has the government

done in the area of public transportation? People who use the TTC every day know that just the buses themselves, the regularity of the subway—the whole system has fallen into disrepair.

In York region, some attempts have been made to start a system, and in that regard—let's be fair here—I want to congratulate the government on one small point. At the 11th hour, a few days before an election, they finally had the courage to take one small step. They have adopted the fourth part of the resolution that we're proposing: establishing a seamless, integrated ticket system allowing users to move across the GTA. We heard the announcement from the Ministry of Transportation just a few days ago. That's yet another thing that has been lifted from Liberal proposals for the campaign and incorporated into the Tory pre-election announcements. Good. Let's get it done. That's one less thing, I tell my friends over there, we'll have to do after the next election.

But I'll tell you something: this does not work unless—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm sorry. Take your seat. Hopefully I'll only have to do this once.

I'm not going to mention the members. You know who you are. I'm going to ask you to be quiet or you're going to leave.

I'm sorry for the interruption. I hope there won't be another one.

**Mr Sorbara:** The point I'm trying to make is that this announcement by the Minister of Transportation doesn't really work until we do what really needs to be done and acknowledge that the greater Toronto area needs a greater Toronto transportation authority.

Sir, you and I were very young when the Toronto Transit Commission was formed. I'm not even sure you were born. But I have a vague memory of it. It used to be that in Metropolitan Toronto, now the city of Toronto, there were 13 transportation authorities. The wisdom of Metropolitan Toronto was that there would be one transportation authority in Toronto, and that was the TTC. That was in the early 1950s. At that time, that was all that was necessary. Well, over the course of the past 50 years, the transportation area has expanded to take in all five municipalities in the greater Toronto area. What we're proposing here and what needs to be done and what is going to be done after the next election, should we be successful, is we're going to create a greater Toronto transportation authority to integrate the transportation system so that one can move seamlessly through the system without the chaos which now exists.

My friends over there are cackling and making noise. I just want to tell them that last Saturday, I had the opportunity to speak at the annual general meeting of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, an organization that is friendly to all political parties but which has had, shall I say, a special relationship with the government party. I just want to read a resolution passed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce at their annual meeting:

"To immediately create and fund the resolve, a task force to conduct a three-month study on establishing a

transportation authority.... The study will make recommendations on the authority's geographic scope, mandated activities, governance structure, business plan, revenue streams and accountability provisions."

That's not much different than the Ontario Liberal Party is proposing, should we win the next election. This is not even a partisan thing. This is something that needs to be done. This city, this region and this greater Toronto area is not working any more because of gridlock.

Over the course of the past eight years under their administration, what have we seen in terms of initiatives? Transportation systems falling into disrepair. There is a theme from over there. If you're in the private sector, things have gotten better. If you're a public transportation user, things have gotten worse. You see that in education. If you go to private schools, you're getting a tax credit. If you go to public schools, everything is cut back. It's the same thing in transportation. You ask one user of the Toronto Transit Commission system whether it's better now than it was eight years ago. During a time of great economic growth, no investments have been made, and this has got to stop. We are choking on our traffic out there.

1110

I am delighted that just a few minutes ago my leader announced to the province that, should we be elected, we're going to be rolling back rates on Highway 407 and we're going to be regulating them. Highway 407 is yet another example of where if you're rich, if you've got all the resources you need, you get private highways built and there's no limit to the fare increases. What investments, I ask my friends on the other side, have you made in public transit in the same area that is served by Highway 407?

These themes must change. Government in Ontario has to start looking at the public interest, the consumer interest, has to start looking at what is in the interest of the overall population. Selling Highway 407 at bargain-basement prices and inviting the owners to raise rates at their leisure was not in the public interest. Falling behind eight years in building public transportation systems was not in the public interest, just like giving tax credits for private education is not in the public interest.

But all that, sir, I tell you, is going to be re-examined over the course of the 28 days when this province determines a choice for the new government. I want to put my friends on the other side on notice that during the 28 days, this party will be campaigning exclusively for the public interest of Ontario, not the private interest, and it is in the public interest in Ontario that we have this kind of transportation authority.

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this Liberal resolution, and I want to speak to a couple of points in the resolution.

First of all, the Liberal Party says it wants to put more GO trains on existing lines. Well, that's nice, but it's a sign that Mr Sorbara doesn't really understand transit. If the Liberals had any experience with real transit issues, they would know that it's not just a matter of buying



more trains. I have news for the opposition: trains run on tracks. Sometimes the track can be as much of a problem as the trains themselves. In the GTA, several parties own the tracks at different points: GO Transit, CP and CN Rail in particular. Those tracks aren't always able to handle more traffic, especially because of grade separation issues or schedule complications. The work is expensive. To put more trains on, which we already have budgeted the money to do, we have to fix the tracks as well, and do it in a way that matches the schedules.

That's why we brought the federal government to the table last winter to negotiate a partnership—without, I might add, the help of the opposition Liberals, who for eight years now have never stood up to their federal cousins in Ottawa. And again on this one, they helped Ontario not at all. We persuaded the federal government to match strategic infrastructure fund monies to our innovative \$1-billion GTIP fund. For people at home, that's the Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships. The Liberal Party of Ontario proved that they value political partisanship more than the public good when they pushed their federal colleagues to push the announcement of these investments out prematurely. They really did this; they tried to sabotage a major transit investment for their own political ends. But I'm pleased to say that despite these efforts, the opposition will be hearing those new trains coming down the tracks, right at them, in the near future.

Second, the Liberal Party wants new vehicles for the TTC. Our Ontario transit renewal partnership fund is already replacing and refurbishing vehicles not just in Toronto but across the GTA. I want to ask the members across the way, why is it that the Liberals only seem to believe that transit is about Toronto? What about Mississauga or Barrie or Guelph or Niagara? If they want to reduce congestion, don't we have to serve new riders as well as old?

Finally, the real gem. The Liberals, in this resolution, want to establish a seamless integrated ticket system allowing users to move across the GTA region with a single ticket. This is very funny. We've already been piloting such a system in Richmond Hill. The pilot is now over. Yesterday we announced our—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** The member in the backbenches of the Liberal Party will know that I didn't allow what he's now doing on the other side of the benches, and I'm no more going to allow it from him than I did them. Now stop.

Sorry for the interruption; please continue.

**Mr Maves:** Yesterday we announced our fare card plan, which will allow riders to do just what the Liberals now, all of a sudden, seem to want. It's like a light went on over there. It will be phased in over the next five years.

Yesterday, when we announced this in this House, it was interesting to note that even though they have the resolution today calling for it and will probably vote in favour of it, the members from Don Valley East and

Eglinton-Lawrence stood up and actually mocked us for the fare card plan. We had a stupid idea, they said. Today I think they're going to vote in favour of it with this member's resolution.

They said we lacked vision. Why would they say this? Apparently our crime is that we are already establishing a seamless, integrated ticket system allowing users to move across the GTA region with a single ticket just like the one Mr Sorbara calls for, just like the one we talked about yesterday that the Liberals mocked but they're going to vote in favour of today. They really should coordinate their resolutions and their comments a little better.

As they said in a press release yesterday, the TTC is participating as a member of the Ontario government task force on inter-regional transit fare cards. The release goes on to explain that the TTC's hope is to move into the system at the end of the life cycle of their existing fare technology. The Liberals call for this technology to be throughout the province in 18 months; the TTC says it's not possible. We have a more rational schedule and we're willing to work with the TTC on this.

Finally, Mr Sorbara and his colleagues stand there and insist that we are stealing ideas from the Liberals. As I've just said, this whole idea has been in a pilot project system for quite some time now. The Liberals want the public to believe that all of this stuff is somehow the brainchild of their caucus. Well, our Smart Growth and smart transportation policies have been in development for years, because good policy takes time. Some of the ideas are ours, but most of them are from other cities, from stakeholders, from thoughtful leaders who volunteered their time for the Smart Growth process, and quite frankly from our party's policy advisory council process, a standing process started by Mike Harris in 1990 where we have policy advisory councils that meet monthly to discuss policy in every aspect of Ontario government life.

Also, I would point out our Seizing Tomorrow's Opportunities process, where we undertook the largest political consultation in Ontario's history. Many transportation issues were raised: expansion of GO, the integrated seamless fare system. All of that has come about over the past few years. It's nothing new, but apparently, as I say, a light has gone on for the Liberals opposite.

What makes this government work is the fact that we, unlike the Liberal Party, can be relied on to actually make things happen, to actually do what we say we are going to do. Some of this work is underway as I speak. Money is flowing, new buses are being bought, and construction is underway. So we thank Mr Sorbara for his resolution and we thank him for the opportunity to talk, but he's wasting his breath and ours. He's behind the times.

If he wants to waste his breath on something, I suggest that for once the Ontario Liberal Party start to stand up to their federal Liberal cousins. Several years ago, we challenged the federal Liberals to match our \$3-billion transit infrastructure program. The federal Liberals have refused to match that \$3 billion. Ontario Liberals like-

wise have been the only political party in Canada that has refused to stand up to the federal Liberals about their underfunding of health care. At some point in time, they're going to have to stand up to their federal cousins. Health care would be a help. Transit might be another area where Mr Sorbara would decide to go to his federal cousins and stand up for the province of Ontario.

1120

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I would like to speak in favour of the resolution from a member who is from the GTA and has a resolution which I think, for the purposes of the GTA, has some compelling arguments and can be expanded to other parts of the province.

First of all, I want to say that I'm delighted to hear the news that finally somebody is going to tackle the exorbitant Highway 407 rates that we're seeing. It's most unfortunate that at the last election the government sold Highway 407 so they could balance the budget. Once again we hear the Dominion Bond Rating Service saying, "No matter what the provincial government is saying today, there is no way they can balance the budget without having yet another fire sale."

You took a public asset, which was Highway 407 in essence, and made it a private asset and now people are being gouged for the purpose of using it. So people who are wealthy enough to use it do so and those who are not are forced to use the other roads.

In terms of transit, I was once chair of the transit commission in St Catharines. At that time the provincial government—it was the Bill Davis government at that time, a Conservative government, and then with subsequent governments the same thing happened—paid 75% of all approved capital costs for municipal transit systems and approximately 50% of the costs of operating. Today, this government pays nothing. First of all, they got out of the business altogether until probably around 2000. They made an announcement, "We're getting out of the business of public transit."

I always felt, again as a person who is involved in public transit, it was important to have, as any jurisdiction in North America would say, a strong provincial component to it, and yet individual transit commissions have been abandoned, unfortunately. They have to purchase their own equipment. Once in a while they get some money from the government and their own operating costs. So it comes either from the fare box or the property tax, which in my view is not fair.

There's a need to expand public transit to a lot of the province. The federal government made an announcement—and my good friend from Niagara Falls might be surprised how often there is communication that takes place with the federal representatives, suggesting what would be good and demanding what would be good for the province of Ontario. I know it was disappointing to the government because they wanted to make an announcement themselves, but the federal government put their chips on the table and said, "Look, we're prepared to provide funding for such things as highways and GO Transit." I suspect that we may see an announce-

ment—I hope we do—that there will be highway improvements through St Catharines because there are egress and access roads, exits and access roads, in the city that are quite dangerous at the present time. I suspect that announcement may come very soon because we have the federal government of course saying that they're prepared to be participants in this, just as they said with GO Transit. As we've expanded around the province, the federal government has now put its chips on the table and said, "Look, we want to see it in places like Niagara." My friend from Niagara Falls and my friend from Erie-Lincoln, Mr Hudak, and probably I would think our minister from Stoney Creek, Brad Clark, would all want to see an expanded service in that area. We have not seen it yet, but with the federal government coming through with its money now it'll increase the pressure on the provincial government to move in this direction. I think it would be good.

My friend from Niagara Falls would agree with me that it's a two-way street. I think he would say it's a two-way street. Not only would there be an opportunity for people who have medical appointments or business appointments or perhaps employment in the city of Toronto to go back and forth from the Niagara region, but also he and I would like to see people coming from the Toronto area to Niagara on a more frequent basis. That would even mean, for instance, that Via Rail may want to increase the number of trains that they have coming in. We need that expanded public transit, but we need a definite commitment.

The wrong signal was sent out when the Harris government, when Premier Eves was the Treasurer, totally abandoned public transit, got out of the business completely. Well, as a result of the opposition making a good case for it, as a result of the public and the municipalities and so on, they were essentially forced back into public transit. It was very reluctant. My suspicion is that if they were to be re-elected we would see them go back to their old position.

The Liberal Party has said—and I thought this was a very good piece of the platform—that we would give to municipalities the right to two cents of the gas tax in the province of Ontario to be designated for transit purposes. That would go an awfully long way to helping municipalities meet their obligations and their desires in the field of public transit.

There are a lot of good things in this document, and a lot of good things in a lot of our documents we've put out, Growing Strong Communities and others. Yes, the government has lifted many of these. I could call for a police investigation of the theft of these ideas, but I consider it flattery when another party takes your ideas and wants to implement them.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** I looked at this resolution today. I didn't get past the first line and I realized that this was entirely a political document. Quite frankly, I don't know how the honourable member expects anyone to support it, even though it does have some laudable goals, unless of course one is a member of



the Liberal Party, because it reads, "The Ontario government should adopt Dalton McGuinty's Growing Strong Communities platform." If I were as a person to vote for this, then I would be saying that I adopt the Liberal platform. Of course, it is impossible for me to do that knowing full well that their platform is far inferior to our own. I would suggest that the Tories have already adopted most of the platform. We heard squeals from you this week at the time of the throne speech that they were stealing all of your ideas. I heard from the honourable member opposite—

**Mr Sorbara:** We didn't steal any of yours, my friend.

**Mr Prue:** That's good. We don't want them to steal our ideas because our ideas are unique and progressive, which is why they will not steal them.

Having said that, that's the point at which I must start. Are there some good ideas in this? Of course there are some good ideas in this. Is it progressive? Is it long-going? I don't think that it goes far enough. Speaking of stealing ideas, it goes on in that first sentence to say "by dedicating two cents of the existing gas tax to municipalities to use for transit." That was first proposed by the NDP more than two years ago. It was the first place that it surfaced in all of Canada. It was there, it was proposed before I even came to this chamber and it is now part of the Liberal platform. It is not unusual around this House or in political parties for one party to steal another party's ideas. The only thing that I would wish was that they would give credit where credit was due.

**Mr Sorbara:** Are you saying you're a Liberal in a hurry?

**Mr Prue:** That was an old definition of a New Democrat, being a Liberal in a hurry. I would like to think it goes a little bit more than that.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Prue:** I have also heard that Liberals are often Conservatives who go a little slower.

You have the whole problem here—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Prue:** Mr Speaker, I thought you were trying to maintain order. Is that still going on, or is Mr Sorbara unique from the group?

Anyway, I think the problem with this resolution goes to the Greater Toronto Transit Authority. This was proposed yesterday and I heard Mr Caplan speak against it. Mr Caplan spoke against what was being proposed by the Conservatives, but today we find that a very similar proposal is being put forward. And we, with the greatest of respect, think this is a wrong-headed way to go. By establishing an authority over the entire GTA, it will have two effects. One is that it will give additional monies, which is not necessarily a bad thing, to the 905 area in order to get people out of their cars and on to public transit. But the second effect is not a good one. The second effect, I would suggest, is to literally starve the Toronto Transit Commission. We know that the Toronto Transit Commission carries more riders, 80% of all the riders in the GTA. We know that the buses and the

travelled routes are 90% of all of those travelled in the GTA. And we know that the Toronto Transit Commission has not been properly funded since the election of the Mike Harris government. In fact, even though the members opposite will talk about giving some \$3 billion spread out over five years, and having given a little bit of money for the Sheppard subway, the people of Toronto know that is a far cry from what happened prior to 1995. Prior to 1995, the government of Ontario paid 75% of the transportation costs for capital—not for operating, but for capital. That 75% allowed for the building of subways. That 75% allowed for new buses and new technology so that there wasn't all diesel. We had natural gas and other exciting things. That 75% allowed for the community buses that used to go around our neighbourhoods. That 75% allowed for buses and streetcars to be regularly upgraded and the systems upgraded.

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All of that has passed. With respect to the Sheppard subway—which was, I think, the wrong place to build it, but at least it was a subway—we see that that is the only subway system that has been built in many, many years in Toronto. With respect, in a very mature urban environment, transit is absolutely essential.

We see this proposal as not doing enough. Whereas the member opposite said, "You know, they seem to be Toronto-centric," I would suggest the Liberals are not Toronto-centric enough.

We, in the New Democratic Party, believe that you must reward communities that have transit systems. That is why our proposal is very different from the one here. That is why I cannot support theirs, even though it is moving slightly in the right direction, because it does not go far enough.

If you will allow, this is what we think needs to be done. It's taken from Public Power, our practical solutions, page 42, if anyone is interested. In a nutshell:

"Howard Hampton and the NDP would guarantee stable year-after-year funding to build a strong public transit system and properly maintain our highways and roads. The NDP's Ontario transportation trust fund would dedicate there cents from the existing 14.7 cents a litre gas tax (\$468 million a year) to transportation, and to no other purpose. An independent board would ensure accountability. Municipalities would have the option of increasing the percentage of the fund to be used for public transit, set initially at 60% for municipal public transit and 25% for road and highway maintenance. The remaining 15%—a total of \$70 million guaranteed each year—would be dedicated to building and maintaining Go Transit. That will help people from the 905 communities around Toronto to commute to work, shop and study.

"Finally, the NDP public transportation plan would provide targeted funding to allow college and university students, senior citizens and people enrolled in a job training program to obtain public transit passes at one third the full rate."

That seems to me to be a great deal more sensible in terms of solutions. It is not Toronto-centric, because it

allows the people of Niagara Falls, Guelph, Kitchener and London, who have public transit systems, to use the money from the gas tax. It allows municipalities that do not have transit systems to use some of the money for building and road maintenance to make sure that we don't have potholes. It allows for the purchase of buses in communities that do not have a transit system so that they might have one. It also ensures that the money is dedicated to resolving the gridlock problem. We do not see that in this particular resolution.

The resolution goes on to talk about how the Liberals are going to sort of work against sprawl. This resolution is going to help the problem of sprawl. One has to remember back—it's a few years ago now, and I don't like to go back to governments that are 15 years old. But we all remember that when Mr Peterson called the election in 1990, he was brought down. He was brought down largely because the public was fed up with the close ties the Liberal Party had at that time to the developers. Names like Patti Starr, of course, come immediately to mind, but also those of Bratty, Muzzo and De Gasperis. Those names brought the Liberal Party down. They were involved in all of this sprawl. They were involved in the building of homes in the GTA. They were involved in the deals that were being made that, quite frankly, the public had no time for.

At the same time that all of these arguments—a few years went by, the NDP brought in—

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** You've got the same sort of plan as the Liberals.

**Mr Prue:** We don't have the same plan.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Yes, you do.

**Mr Prue:** No, we have a better plan. At the same time, after the coming of the NDP government in 1990, the NDP put forward a planning act, a green planning act. That planning act was to try to stop urban sprawl. The Liberals voted against it. The Liberals vowed that if they won the next election, they would get rid of the planning act. Of course, they did not win the next election, and the Tories did it for them.

But the reality is that they wanted to go back to the days of sprawl. I would suggest that this is nothing more than a cover-up of their real intention.

What else is needed here? What is being talked about is a greater Toronto transit authority. We do not believe that transit authority would be in the best interest of the people of the GTA. We think what is far more important is to get back to a governance structure that has proven it can work. We believe the Greater Toronto Services Board of elected officials within the greater Toronto area is the way to mediate and the way to get things done. That was our proposal. It was implemented by the Conservatives and now disbanded.

With respect—and especially with respect to Hazel McCallion, whom I admire very much—the Smart Growth panels are not the way to resolve these issues. The Smart Growth panels are made up of non-elected people who do not have to go back to the public and who do not have to be accountable. We need a Greater To-

ronto Services Board of elected officials from each of the municipalities, who can sit down and negotiate, and we need a province that wants to be part of a huge development of infrastructure related to transportation to stop gridlock.

It makes absolutely no sense that in Toronto the subway stops at Finch Avenue. That subway should extend up Yonge Street. That subway should go all the way up Yonge Street, as far as it can possibly and reasonably go to pick people up. It should not stop at Finch Avenue; it should be included. I don't know how one does that when it ends up that the city of Toronto is responsible for paying for it. That's why it stopped at Finch. That's why it doesn't go beyond Finch, up to Steeles. That's why it doesn't go beyond Steeles. That's why it doesn't go to York University or beyond York University, if you're talking about the University line. It's because the city of Toronto, quite frankly, cannot pay for it. It needs to be paid for by some of the other municipalities, and the municipalities under our plan would have the money and the wherewithal to do that.

We also think that the province should get back in in a bigger way. Sure, it's laudable that some money is being given after the 75% was cut, but it is simply not enough. Our proposal would put in some \$468 million to do precisely that. What is contained in this Liberal platform document that is being put forward here today is the total of some \$312 million. Again, the part that is problematic is not that \$312 million is not enough—we don't think it is—but how that money would be split. There is nothing in this motion or in their platform, with respect, as to which municipalities would get the money. Would it be the municipalities that have transit systems already in existence that need it? Would it be municipalities that don't have any transit system per se? Who is going to get it? How are they going to get it? Is the GTTA going to give the money on a 50-50 basis, both inside and outside Toronto, based on population, as it is approximately 50-50? Is it going to be based on ridership? Is it going to be based on need? It quite simply is not here, and many of us fear that the Toronto Transit Commission would ultimately be the loser.

That is why all of the members of the Toronto Transit Commission, from its chair to the people who work for the commission—the various commissioners, those who occupy senior positions—oppose a GTTA. They oppose the fact because they believe that in the long term, the overwhelming majority of transit users in this province who live in mature environments like Toronto, like London, like Ottawa will ultimately be the losers. So, quite frankly, I have some very real difficulty supporting this today.

I'd just like to go back to where I started from: that this is clearly a political document. It is not untoward, I suppose, with an election looming in two or three weeks and everyone expecting to be out there knocking on doors, that people are trying to put their party's best foot forward, but this should not be seen as anything more than an election document, an attempt to try to put the



Liberal Party's position before the people of Ontario in this Legislature. It is not illegal and it is not immoral, and I guess people can do that if they wish, but it should be seen as nothing more than that. It is not a solution; it is an election document. The Conservatives have put forward theirs and I suppose I have put forward mine now as well.

The people ultimately will decide who speaks best for transit, who speaks best and who is committed to transit in the province. We believe that the three-cent dedicated fund, the \$468 million, the sharing on an equitable basis and the building of roads is the way to go, and we cannot support something that only goes halfway.

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**Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** It's a pleasure for me to join in the debate this morning. I have to say that I rarely agree with the NDP speakers but the member for Beaches-East York, who was a former councillor and a former mayor, when he says that he can't support this resolution, it's clear that we can't support this resolution because it doesn't do enough.

I find it strange, actually, that the Liberals would bring this forward in this manner instead of waiting for an opposition day and introducing legislation for full debate. It comes to us on a Thursday morning at private members' hour as a resolution, dashed together like all the other policies that are not well thought out and introduced by someone other than their leader—wannabe leader, but not their leader, the leader they keep under cloak. They need to do this in case they change their mind later on, the way they changed their mind on Hydro, the way they can't decide on the double-hatter issue and the way they changed their mind on the equity in education tax credit, the way the Leader of the Opposition changes his mind on teacher strikes. Yesterday he was for it; today he's against it. We await the decision of tomorrow.

We do know one thing about the Liberals and that is that they will raise taxes, increase spending beyond revenue and run deficits. How do I know that? Because of their record. Everyone in the province knows that.

So let me begin my remarks with this qualifier: we debate this Liberal policy today knowing that they will change their mind later, knowing that they will use the kind of method for creating policy that is just trying to play politics. Bringing forward sound ideas for the people of Ontario is not the Liberal way and the Liberal plan.

We have in the recent throne speech made various commitments to municipalities. The government recognizes there's a number of local challenges municipalities experience. We've committed to working with municipalities and local representatives to find proper solutions for some of the issues they bring forward.

Premier Eves and Janet Ecker in the recent budget speech increased the level of funding for municipalities. We have made long-term commitments so that the municipalities that receive funding know what it is they have to work with. By 2005-06 these new commitments will

result in an increase of 18% or \$106 million over 2002-03. Our multi-year funding approach is contingent upon three factors: economic growth, levels of federal government support and the results municipalities achieve through greater accountability to the taxpayers.

In 2001 we announced a 10-year, \$3.25-billion plan to ensure the province has a transit system that will help strengthen the economy and protect the environment. The government also committed to more than \$10 billion over 10 years for the province's highway network. The \$3.25 billion that I mentioned just a moment ago includes \$359 million in transit assistance through the transit investment plan.

Just yesterday the Eves government introduced a new way for commuters to travel across the Golden Horseshoe with a world-class integrated transit fare system. I must tell the House that my constituents in Thornhill are very happy to have the new transit plan. Everyone in York region will benefit from the convenience of this new transit card that will allow them access through nine municipalities. Acting on advice from the Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel—and I have to say, the Smart Growth panel is a body that is not motivated by any political pressure. They are people who have a vested interest in the benefits of the province and the communities. These are people who have come together to give good advice to the province, and we are taking that advice.

Through their advice, this government is investing \$40 million toward the establishment and operation of this new, integrated system. We are also investing \$33.2 million in the year 2003-04 for the new GTA bus rapid transit system to help provide a new rapid transit route so that commuters will be able to travel across the top of the GTA from Halton, through York region and on to Durham. We are investing over \$1 billion in 2003-04 to improve Ontario's highway network. Since 1995, when this government was first elected, we have invested more than \$3.6 billion in public transit and \$7.5 billion in highways.

Our municipalities are core to our province. We believe that we, as the provincial government, are working well with the municipalities in getting input from them. Throughout last year, I conducted consultations in seven cities across the province and connected with a lot of the stakeholders across the province, and they told us that we need to consult with them. That's what we're doing. We're consulting with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Through our memorandum of understanding, there's constant dialogue. I believe, as the provincial government, we are doing our part to help the municipalities.

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** I'm pleased to join this debate and lend support not only to my colleague from Vaughan-King-Aurora for his resolution but to the proposals of our party. You won't be surprised to find that I'm going to vote in favour of this.

It's astonishing that the newly crowned minister stands up and makes this enormously proud defence of

her government's record. I think the most telling piece in there is not that a year or so ago, as they saw the train coming to them in the tunnel, did they make this commitment for a 10-year plan for three billion bucks a year—it will be interesting to see if it's backed up by the estimates spending since it was announced—but that the minister gave us a real glimpse into what has been going on under these guys: \$10 billion for transportation, combined highways and transit, over eight years equals the lowest level of capital investment in decades.

What has the effect of that been? It has been environmental degradation in terms of communities that have no capacity to properly incorporate public transit. It has meant loss of family time as a result of the kind of gridlock which has become the norm for so many people in our province. It has meant that so many of the gains that urban areas like Toronto had been able to be so proud of because of the investments made by government after government over time, regardless of their stripe, to enhance the quality of our public transportation systems—then these guys came to office in 1995 and said, “No more will progress in an urban area be measured on the basis of the capacity of individuals to get from work to home or from home to school without starting up their own car.”

I have the honour of representing a riding that probably has one of the higher densities and the most comprehensive public transit system in Canada. So many of the subways that people benefit from run underneath my riding. I have the opportunity to campaign at subway stops and to see thousands of people walk to a subway stop and go to work and, in doing so, have a more modest footprint in terms of their impact on the environment. We're living instead in this city where you can, on so many days, suffer health hardship, effects to your health because of the air that we breathe.

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These guys opposite, as an election nears, always find a way to make a promise. But as we saw on the 407, we should be very wary of any promise that they make around election time. In the case of the 407, we saw that in fact, although Mr Sampson was pleased to send out a release, the effect was that people using the 407 have been gouged.

The last point I want to make about this is that I'm proud to be part of a political party that views the nature of its relationships with municipalities as a mature relationship, one that allows municipalities to do their job, to plan comprehensive integrated transportation systems. With much ballyhoo, they talk about their commitment to Sheppard. Sheppard is providing some limited benefit and some dividend, but it stands alone as a stub of a subway, disconnected at either end from the kinds of enhancements and expansion that would actually bring meaningful benefit, like linkages to Scarborough or westward, past Downsview and perhaps toward an airport.

But there is nothing in what this government does that says, “We will work with our municipal partners and

allow them the freedom to fulfill their responsibilities to plan for an integrated transportation system.” That's where we're different.

Two cents a litre on the gas tax dedicated to public transportation projects reaffirms this commitment and will allow cities like my city of Toronto to plan a transportation system that can incorporate even more people into our great city. That's why I'm supporting this resolution.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I know there's limited time here. I just want to put a few things on the record. First of all, this is another Liberal tax grab. Clearly, if you look at their booklet, it's quite short on numbers and long on rhetoric. They say by allocating two cents—Mr Sorbara's resolution addresses that specifically. It's a tax increase.

But if you look at this government's record on investments in transportation, Mr Klees said it all yesterday. In fact, the longer record—if you want to look back further, the purpose of establishing the Greater Toronto Services Board in 1995 was for one reason: to address the transit and integration issues. The bill Mr Klees introduced yesterday was the next step on the route to integrating transit across the GTA. It's the right thing to do. Mr Sorbara's method is: tax the people.

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston):** This is not only a resolution whose time has come—it certainly should be supported and looked at as a positive effort put forward by a member of this Legislature; yes, it has our leader's name attached to it—but it is an idea whose time has come, is long past due.

This is a government that clearly does not recognize how far we are being set back by their lack of good policy. Smog; gridlock causes smog. Smog is killing 1,900 people a year in this province. It's a very serious matter. In fact, the air pollution caused by the ever-increasing number of cars on our roads is a serious threat to our health and the air we breathe; it becomes dirtier. There is no question about that. The fact is, it is a health issue. It is a matter of life and death for many people. Supporting public transit is a very big priority that should be taken seriously by this government and has been for the time that it has been in office.

It is also an economic question. Gridlock is causing the economy to be set back as well. It's costing us \$2 billion per year in lost productivity in the GTA as a direct result of gridlock. Gridlock is caused by the fact that we do not have—and there's a clear connection—adequate infrastructure to keep up with the growth in population, to keep up with the growth in this economic engine that we call the GTA. I tell you, our growth as a vibrant economy in the future is going to be threatened if we do not have the kind of investments in public transit that we desperately need in the GTA. It is clear that when we talk about growth in the GTA, we cannot continue to build more highways, put more cars on the road and believe that is going to solve all our problems. Public transit is clearly the only way to go.

We need a GTA-wide authority to coordinate that, to have an integrated system, because the GTA is a massive



area. If you ask anyone, there is no way to get around the GTA easily on public transit. You can't do that. You can't go from Pickering to Mississauga. You cannot get there in a reasonable amount of time and there is no integrated fare package. So the initiative by the minister to begin that process is a good one, but you have a long way to go.

When you talk about the lack of fairness, everything this government does lacks the fairness that should be there, with a view to ensuring it is affordable. People use public transit precisely because it is affordable, so when you force them on to the 407 in the 905 because there is no alternative—in fact, I would argue that other people in the greater city of Toronto do not have an easy way to get around because they're forced to use the 401, which is highly congested. There is no alternative. We have gridlock beyond compare in North America. It's a result of the neglect of this government. Fairness does not enter into their vocabulary, not once. When talking about making sure that we have more infrastructure, they want to build more toll roads, which obviously will appeal to people who can afford to pay those tolls. But it's the ordinary, average citizen who has to get to work in the morning and who must use public transit who is being shortchanged by this government.

There is no public transit to speak of in the 905 area that is easily accessible, an interregional transit system that you can use to get around the 905. That doesn't exist in Toronto at the present time. That's what we're calling for in this resolution and that's why we should support this resolution.

**The Acting Speaker:** The time for the member's debate on this has expired. The mover of the motion, the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, now has up to two minutes to wrap up.

**Mr. Sorbara:** If anyone wants to know what this debate is really about, I invite them to reread the comments of my colleague Mr Bradley, of my colleague Mr Smitherman and of my seatmate Mr Cordiano.

I want to turn to the point Mr Bradley made, because this is really at the heart of what has happened in Ontario over the past eight years. It was Premier Mike Harris who said, on behalf of the Conservative government, "We're no longer in the business of public transportation." Now compare that to what has happened in every other great city region in the world, whether it's Boston or Los Angeles or New York, to name the ones on the North American continent—massive investments in public transportation, new governing authorities to make sure those city regions work.

As Mr Smitherman pointed out, the commitment the new Ernie Eves government made, the \$10 billion or \$8 billion over how many years, represents the lowest level historically of capital support for transit in the recent history of this province.

The record of this government when it is finally defeated will be the deterioration of public services in every area: education, health care, the environment, and notably, support for growing communities. The people of Ontario have an opportunity to choose soon. If they

choose with us, they will see a new era in public transportation. I thank you, sir, for the opportunity to talk about it today.

**The Acting Speaker:** The time for debate has expired.

## IMMIGRATION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Mr Tascona has moved private member's notice of motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr Tascona's motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

## GRIDLOCK

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Mr Sorbara has moved private member's notice of motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please indicate by saying "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.*

## IMMIGRATION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Mr Tascona has moved private member's notice of motion number 1.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until your name has been recognized by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Patten, Richard
Bisson, Gilles	Hastings, John	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Ruprecht, Tony
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Curling, Alvin	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Duncan, Dwight	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ecker, Janet	McLeod, Lyn	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Young, David

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until your name is called.

**Nays**

Agostino, Dominic	Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Cordiano, Joseph	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Di Cocco, Caroline	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Sorbara, Greg

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 63; the nays are 12.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. The doors will now be untiled for 30 seconds to leave or enter the chamber before the next vote.

**GRIDLOCK**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** All those in favour of Mr Sorbara's private member's notice of motion number 2 will now rise and remain standing until your name is called.

**Ayes**

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	McMeekin, Ted
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Kennedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, David	Sorbara, Greg
Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn	

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed will remain standing until their name is called.

**Nays**

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 26; the nays are 48.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

This House will now stand adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1213 to 1330.*

**OPPOSITION DAY MOTIONS**

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Members will be aware there appear on today's orders and notices paper two notices of an opposition day to be debated next week. Under standing order 42(d), the Speaker is re-

quired to select one of those notices for consideration, taking into account the order in which they were received. I would like to advise the members that the motion by Mr Bradley is the one that will be selected for debate next week.

**CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT**

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** On Thursday, May 1, 2003, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Mr Conway, rose on a question of privilege to indicate that the circumstances surrounding the presentation of the budget speech in a private facility in Brampton on March 27, 2003, a day on which the Legislature stood prorogued, amounted to a prima facie case of contempt of the House. According to the member, the events of that day were an offence against the authority and dignity of the House. He also indicated that the government made a clear and deliberative choice to deliver a budget outside the House, thereby offending the convention of responsible government and undermining the financial function of Parliament.

The member for Niagara Centre, Mr Kormos, also spoke to the incident. According to the member, the government breached the constitutional convention of presenting the budget in the House. He indicated that the breach was conscious and premeditated, and that the budget was presented in a controlled environment with invited guests, that budgets are confidence matters and that the Speaker has the authority to remedy the breach.

The government House leader, Mr Stockwell, responded to these arguments by indicating that the Speaker cannot deal with constitutional arguments, and that a budget process should not be characterized as a matter of contempt; if anything, it is a matter of order and as such, the process that occurred on March 27 did not offend any standing order, practice or precedent.

I've had the opportunity to review the Hansard from last Thursday, the written submissions from the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and the member for Niagara Centre, and the relevant standing orders, precedents, practices and authorities.

I will begin by addressing the arguments that were raised concerning the constitutionality of the budget presentation, or the question of whether a constitutional convention exists, respecting the budget process.

As members will know, Speakers have ruled on numerous occasions that it is not open to the Speaker to give a decision upon a constitutional questions, or decide a question of law.

It is settled in our precedents, and indeed in our practices and precedents of Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth, that legal and constitutional issues are best left to the courts and to litigants.

For instance, the fourth edition of Australia's House of Representatives Practice indicates the following at pages 189 and 190: "[T]he obligation to interpret the Constitution does not rest with the Chair.... [T]he only body fully entitled to do so is the High Court. Not even the House



has the power to finally interpret the terms of the Constitution.... [I]t is not the duty of the Speaker to give a decision on (to interpret) a question of law."

Citation 168(5) of the sixth edition of *Beauchesne* states that "[t]he Speaker will not give a decision upon a constitutional question nor decide a question of law, though the same may be raised on a point of order or privilege," as indeed has occurred here.

Therefore, the Speaker has no authority to make a determination of *prima facie* breach of privilege or contempt where such a determination is based on the constitutionality or legality of the presentation of the March 27 budget outside the House; this House is not the proper place for those questions to be resolved. However, I will consider the case that has been made by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and the member for Niagara Centre to the extent that it does not put the Speaker in the position of having to decide a constitutional or legal issue.

Before doing so, I want to reflect on the argument of the government House leader, who suggests that the Speaker should address the budget issue by looking to the standing orders. He also suggested that if the standing orders do not resolve the issue, then and only then the Speaker should look to practice and precedent, and that if practice and precedent do not resolve the matter, then and only then the Speaker should look to the parliamentary authorities. In effect, the government House leader contends that the budget process of March 27 was in order and that as such it is not a matter of contempt. In view of this argument, I shall initially address whether anything about this process raises a matter of order.

By way of background, it should be noted that on March 27, just before the Minister of Finance presented the budget in Brampton, the budget and related papers were deposited with the Clerk of the House pursuant to standing order 39(a). The standing order reads as follows:

"Reports, returns and other documents required to be laid before the House by any act of the assembly or under any standing order or resolution of the House, or that any minister wishes to present to the House, may be deposited with the Clerk of the House, whether or not on a sessional day, and such report, return or other document shall be deemed for all purposes to have been presented to or laid before the House. A record of such document shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings on the day it is filed except that where it is filed on a day that is not a sessional day, it shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings of the next sessional day."

Standing order 39(a) does not specifically indicate whether the budget and related papers are "documents" within the meaning of that standing order. However, it gives ministers a wide latitude to deposit with the Clerk of the House any documents they wish to present to the House—and even if the House is not meeting.

I appreciate that standing orders 57 and 58 provide for a budget process inside the House, but they do not prohibit a supplementary budget presentation outside the House. I doubt that the House contemplated the occur-

rence of a supplementary budget process outside the House when it created standing order 39(a), but I am satisfied that the House intended that this standing order should be given a broad interpretation, and so that is what I am giving it.

I'm reinforcing this view by the knowledge that on April 20, 1988 the Votes and Proceedings, which were published under the authority of Speaker Edighoffer, indicate that the budget and budget papers were deposited with the Clerk of the House pursuant to what is now standing order 39(a).

I appreciate that the procedural circumstances in 1988 were different than what they are in 2003. In 1988, the calculated reading of petitions of the House by members of one of the opposition parties prevented the Treasurer from making the traditional budget presentation and speech on the floor of the House on budget day. In addition, the House had denied the Treasurer's request for unanimous consent to end the routine proceeding Petitions at 4 pm on budget day so that he could move the budget motion and present the budget.

In the wake of these developments, the Treasurer deposited the budget and related papers with the Clerk of the House in order to protect the confidentiality of the budget process and to release the lock-up. I refer members to page 142 of the Journals and pages 2654 and 2655 of the *Hansard* for April 20, 1988.

These extenuating circumstances were not present in the 2003 budget. Even if they were, I cannot see how they are relevant to determining whether or not the deposit of a particular document with the Clerk of the House pursuant to standing order 39(a) is a matter of order, the interpretation of which does not turn on the presence or absence of extenuating circumstances.

The other distinguishing feature about the 1998 budget is that the House was actually meeting. In the case before me now, the House was not meeting because the Legislature has been prorogued on March 12. I have reflected on whether the standing orders permit the budget to be deposited with Clerk of the House after the Legislature has been prorogued. I find that our practice has been that all manner of documentations have been deposited with the Clerk of the House in the intersession period, and that these documents have been recorded in the Votes and Proceedings soon after the commencement of the new session. On this point, I refer members to the Votes and Proceedings of May 1, which indicates, at pages 9 and 10, that 37 items, including the 2003 budget and related papers, were tabled in the interval between the third and fourth sessions.

If there was nothing out of order concerning the deposit of the budget and related papers on March 27, was there anything out of order in what the government did next? I am referring here to the budget-like speech by the Minister of Finance in a private facility, not inside the House or the precincts, before an invitation-only audience selected by the government. The argument was made that the government was not respecting the traditions of the House—in particular, the tradition that the budget should be presented formally in the House.

Looking to our precedents, I note that, apart from the 1988 budget incident, there have been other occasions when a budget or a budget-type speech has not been presented inside the House. On April 21, 1993, Speaker Warner made the following statement, at page 160 of the Hansard for that day, concerning the government's intention to present its social contract proposals, which some members referred to as a mini-budget, outside the House:

"I think the honourable member for Parry Sound should know my views on this subject. I hold a very strong view that the matters of substance dealing with Parliament should be announced in Parliament. I think that's a very sound principle.

"The member will also know that for better or worse there is nothing in our standing orders or procedures which compels the minister to make the statements inside the House, including budgets, and indeed there is nothing out of order about announcing a budget outside of the House, and if memory serves, that in fact has occurred in this province.

"But I would reiterate that all matters of substance of a parliamentary nature should be made here. I have no control over making that happen. I can only ask that people do that."

Immediately thereafter, the House refused a request for unanimous consent to allow the Treasurer to present his budget proposal to the House.

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On budget day in 2001, the House refused two government requests for unanimous consent to recess the House so the budget could be presented to the House. After the first request was refused, the Speaker indicated that "if there is not unanimous consent [to recess], the Minister of Finance does not need to read the speech in here." Shortly after this ruling, the budget speech was delivered in the House when the government was able to secure the adjournment of the House, which does not require unanimous consent. I refer members to pages 559 to 562 of the Hansard for May 9, 2001.

What I am essentially saying, then, is that the 2003 budget process does not raise a matter of order. The government House leader submits that if this is so, then that process is not a matter of contempt. I disagree because "order" is conceptually distinct from both "privilege" and "contempt."

To exemplify this distinction, let me refer to the January 22, 1997 ruling that was mentioned by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. In that ruling, a member rose on a question of privilege to indicate that government advertising amounted to contempt of the House, and the Speaker responded by finding that a *prima facie* case of contempt was established. Like the case before me now, the incident occurred outside the House and the precinct. Were I to accept the government House leader's argument, it would have been open to the Speaker in 1997 to rule that there was no *prima facie* case of contempt—and that it was not necessary for him to consider the merits of the arguments based on contempt—because the advertising in question did not offend a House rule.

In short, then, I say that a finding that nothing is out of order about the budget process does not preclude the Speaker from assessing the merits of the arguments based on contempt. The tiered process that the government House leader referred to—that is, first the standing orders, then practice and precedent, and then the authorities—is applied to consideration of matters of order, not matters of privilege or contempt.

Before turning to those arguments, I want to explain the meaning of "contempt," and the best way for me to do that is to first explain the meaning of "privilege." Parliamentary privilege is defined at page 65 of the 22nd edition of Erskine May. Like Erskine May, standing order 21(a) indicates that there are two overarching categories of privilege. The first category consists of privileges that are enjoyed by the House collectively: the power to discipline—that is, the right to punish persons guilty of breach of privilege or contempts and the power to expel members; the right to regulate its own internal affairs; the authority to maintain the attendance and service of its members; the right to institute inquiries and to call witnesses and demand papers; the right to administer oaths to witnesses; and the right to publish papers containing defamatory materials. The second category consists of privileges that are enjoyed by individual members: freedom of speech; freedom from arrest in civil actions; exemption from jury duty; and exemption from attendance as a witness in the courts.

Having outlined the meaning of "privilege," I want to refer to a May 9, 1983, precedent in which Speaker Turner ruled on a question of privilege concerning a budget leak. The Speaker made the following ruling, which can be found at pages 38 and 39 of the Journals for that day:

"Budget secrecy is a political convention as is the practice that the Treasurer presents his budget in the House before discussing it in any other public forum. It has nothing to do with parliamentary privilege.

"As I stated in my ruling of February 1, 1983, 'although it is a courtesy to the Assembly for a minister to release information in the assembly before releasing it to the press or the public, it is not a breach of the privileges ... of the assembly if this does not happen.'"

In effect, Speaker Turner stated that the presentation of the budget was not a matter that fell under any collective or individual privilege. Given this ruling, I find that a *prima facie* case of privilege has not been established with respect to the presentation of the budget outside the House.

Contempt: I now turn to the issue of whether the 2003 budget process raises a matter of contempt. Let me begin this by indicating that Erskine May defines "contempt" in the following terms, at pages 108, 117, and 120 of the 22nd edition:

"Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly



or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence. It is therefore impossible to list every act which might be considered to amount to a contempt, the power to punish for such an offence being of its nature discretionary....

"Indignities offered to the House by words spoken or writings published reflecting on its character or proceedings have been punished by both the Lords and the Commons upon the principle that such acts tend to obstruct the Houses in the performance of their functions by diminishing the respect due to them."

"Other acts besides words spoken or writings published reflecting upon either House or its proceedings which, though they do not tend directly to obstruct or impede either House in the performance of its functions, yet have a tendency to produce this result indirectly by bringing such House into odium, contempt or ridicule or by lowering its authority may constitute contempts."

That is what Erskine May says on contempt.

In the Canadian House of Commons, on October 10, 1989, Speaker Fraser explained the difference between privilege and contempt in the following terms at page 4459 of Hansard:

"[A]ll breaches of privileges are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege. A contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member[;] it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results. Matters ranging from minor breaches of decorum to grave attacks against the authority of Parliament may be considered as contempts."

Maingot's Parliamentary Privilege in Canada indicates that contempt cannot be codified—it has no limits. It states the following at pages 226 and 227 of the 2nd edition:

"[T]he 'privileges' of the House cannot be exhaustively codified; there are many acts or omissions that might occur where the House would feel compelled to find that a contempt has taken place, even though such acts or omissions do not amount to an attack on or disregard for any of the enumerated rights and immunities....

"As a Speaker said, "... the dimension of contempt of Parliament is such that the House will not be constrained in finding a breach of privileges of members, or of the House. This is precisely the reason that, while our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred."

I also want to remind members that the authority to decide whether or not there is a contempt of the House resides with the House, not with the Speaker. In this regard, Maingot states on page 221:

"While the Speaker may find that a *prima facie* case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish for contempt."

How, then, does the Speaker decide whether or not a *prima facie* case has been made out? Again, Maingot is helpful in this regard. It states the following at pages 221 and 227:

"A *prima facie* case of privilege in the parliamentary sense is one where the evidence on its face as outlined by the member is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to debate the matter....

"If the Speaker feels any doubt on the question, he should ... leave it to the House."

Having reflected on these authorities, I will apply them to the case before me now. It is hard to recall a time in recent memory when a matter of parliamentary process has so incensed people inside and outside this province. Many Ontarians from all walks of life have complained in an overwhelmingly negative way—to my office, to members directly, through various media, and to the government itself—that the government's approach to communicating the 2003 budget to Ontarians has undermined parliamentary institutions and processes.

As I've already indicated, there have been occasions in the past when a Minister of Finance or a Treasurer has neither personally presented the budget in the House nor read the budget speech in the House. In the case at hand, however, the government indicated that the events of March 27 were motivated by a desire—in the March 27 press release issued by the Ministry of Finance—to have "a direct conversation with the people of Ontario."

To the extent that they imply that parliamentary institutions and processes in Ontario tend to interfere with the government's message to the public, such statements tend to reflect adversely on those institutions and processes. If the government has a problem with those institutions and processes, or if it wants to improve them, why did it not ask the House sometime during the last session to reflect on the problem and to consider appropriate changes? Traditional ways to do just that would be to introduce a bill, table a notice of motion, enter into discussions at the level of the House leaders, or ask the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly to study and report on the problem. Given the public's reaction to the government's decision to stage a budget presentation outside the House, I think Ontarians are rather fond of their traditional parliamentary institutions and parliamentary processes, and they want greater deference to be shown towards the traditional parliamentary forum in which public policies are proposed, debated and voted on.

When the government or any member claims that a budget presentation is needed outside the House well before it happens inside the House in order to communicate directly with the people or because of a perceived flaw in the parliamentary institution, there is a danger that the representative role of each and every member of this House is undermined, that respect for the institution is diminished, and that Parliament is rendered irrelevant. Parliamentary democracy is not vindicated by the government conducting a generally one-sided public relations event on the budget well in advance of members

having an opportunity to hold the government to account for the budget in this chamber.

I can well appreciate that parliamentary proceedings can be animated and often emotional, and they can be cumbersome. It may not be the most efficient of political systems, but it is a process that reflects the reality that members, like the people of Ontario, may not be of one mind on matters of public policy. A mature parliamentary democracy is not a docile, esoteric or one-way communications vehicle; it is a dynamic, interactive and representative institution that allows the government of the day to propose and defend its policies—financial and otherwise. It also allows the opposition to scrutinize and hold the government to account for those policies. It is an open, working and relevant system of scrutiny and accountability. If any members of this House have a problem with the concept of parliamentary democracy, then they have some serious explaining to do.

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I have a lingering unease about the road we are going down, and my sense is that the House and the general public have the same unease. Let me summarize it by posing the following questions:

First, what does the planned presentation of a budget speech outside the House suggest about the relevancy and primacy of parliament? It is one thing not to make the traditional budget speech in the House because the government is backed into such a decision by an ongoing House process, or a budget leak; it is quite another for the government to have a deliberate plan not to do so.

Second, if left unchallenged, will this incident not embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes for other kinds of events that traditionally occur in the House?

Third, why is an extraordinary parliamentary process needed if there is already a process in the House? If the answer is that it enables direct communication with the public, to what extent does such an answer undermine the representative, scrutiny and accountability functions of parliament?

From where I stand, the 2003 budget process has raised too many questions for the House not to reflect on them. In order to facilitate that exercise, I am finding that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do. As I have said, only the House, not the Speaker, can make a finding that there has been a contempt of the House.

Before turning to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to move the appropriate motion, I want to thank him, the member for Niagara Centre and the government House leader for speaking to these matters last Thursday.

I now will call on the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** I want to say to you, Mr Speaker and members of the table, that I appreciate, and I'm sure all members do, the

time and the care that you have taken to deliberate upon this matter.

I would like to move the following motion:

That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario.

**The Speaker:** Mr Conway has moved that this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario.

I just want to take a moment to remind members of our process in the circumstances. Standing order 21(b) reads as follows: "Once the Speaker finds that a *prima facie* case of privilege exists it shall be taken into consideration immediately." Therefore, all other business of the House is set aside until the motion proposed by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has been decided. I call on the member to lead off on the debate.

**Mr Conway:** I recognize that members have important business to which attention must turn. I want to say a couple of things. Let me start with this: that it is an important matter for me. I do appreciate very much what the Speaker has reflected upon in his ruling. I did take some care to draft a motion that I hope is broadly acceptable to both sides of the table. I'm not here to repeat the position that I developed a week ago today. I want to say a couple of things because I know some other members want to engage in this debate. My remarks this afternoon are directed to colleagues on both sides of the aisle as members of Parliament, as members of Parliament with clear and important responsibilities in Parliament and outside.

As I indicated last week, when I reflect upon Parliament's core duty and core responsibility, it is hard for me to imagine a more central and a more important responsibility for Parliament as an institution, and for those of us as individual members of that institution, than to hold government to account for what it does, and most especially what government does in the raising of and the spending of public money. That is why the issue before us in this matter is so important.

When I heard what was intended six or eight weeks ago, when the Minister of Finance indicated that day in early March that for the first time in my lifetime, on a premeditated basis, the budget was going to be presented not only outside of the Legislature but, according to the revised calendar, at least four or five weeks before Parliament was going to reconvene, I said to myself, "Well, if this isn't important, I don't know what is." I repeat: fundamental to our responsibilities as members of the Legislature and as members of Parliament is to hold government to account for what it does. And as the authorities to which I made reference last week—most especially Professor Ward and Dr Forsey, to name but two—make plain, it is Parliament's control over the public purse that gives Parliament its ultimate and absolute authority and control. So that's why this is important. I think it is important for this Parliament to make plain at this point in time that we view what



happened a few weeks ago with the so-called Magna budget presentation as serious and not something we want to see repeated. A fair-minded person would have to observe that there have been developments over the recent past, here and elsewhere, that have nibbled at, if not more, some of these rather significant responsibilities.

I must say, Mr Speaker, I was surprised and a bit concerned at the amount of time my friend the government House leader spent last week in citing the 1988 situation involving Mr Nixon and the presentation of the provincial budget in that year.

I want to simply read a couple of paragraphs from Mr Finkelstein's opinion letter dated March 24, 2003, on that subject. Let me just read a couple of paragraphs from Mr Finkelstein.

"The exceptional filibuster situation occurred in 1988. The Minister of Finance"—my colleague Mr Nixon—"had, in accordance with standing order 57(a) and tradition, given notice of his intention to deliver the" Ontario "budget to the House on a specific date. At the time the budget was to be presented, the minister attempted, but was unable, to secure the consent of the House to make the budget speech. Members of the press, political observers and people from the business community were already in 'lock-up.' The minister, concerned with his responsibility for maintaining budget secrecy, could not delay the presentation of the budget to the House. Accordingly, he"—Mr Nixon—"tabled the budget in the House in accordance with the standing orders. After doing so, he spoke with reporters outside, revealing the substance of the budget speech.

"Thus, in this sole instance in which the government held its main presentation of the budget outside of the House, it did so only after being refused the consent of the House and after presenting the budget documents to the assembly. Given the history and principles underlying this tradition, namely, that the government must account for its economic policies and legislation before the democratically elected assembly, this is not only a precedent which supports the existence of a convention, but is also evidence that the Minister of Finance considered himself bound to deliver his budget speech in the assembly until the assembly prevented [him] from doing so. The assembly, as an institution," concludes Mr Finkelstein, "was given the opportunity to hear and debate the budget speech, and chose, as was its democratic prerogative, to refuse that opportunity."

But it is, I think, clear from Mr Finkelstein's opinion on that matter that the 1988 situation is qualitatively different from that which we experienced in March 2003.

1400

Again, I want to underscore something that Mr Speaker has observed in his ruling, on his own account and in reference to many of the authorities: ultimately, these matters turn on how we view ourselves, our responsibilities and what we intend to do about them. I want to say quite honestly to my friends as much on this side of the Speaker's chair as my friends on the treasury

bench, that at the end of the day, these matters turn on the culture of this place. It is not, as some would have you believe, I say to my colleagues and my friends in other political parties, ultimately a matter about mechanical, technical construction. One can imagine writing all kinds of rules to do this and that. At the end of the day, it's how do we see ourselves and what kind of spirit, what kind of intent, what kind of purpose, do we bring to the standing orders and the conventions that everywhere infuse the operation of a Parliament in this British parliamentary system of ours?

Let me say parenthetically that I'm not some pedant who thinks you can never change. In fact, this system has seen a lot of change, even in my 28 years. We do some things today around the budget that were not imagined even 25 or 30 years ago, and I think that's probably a healthy thing. Most, if not all, of what we do differently today has been arrived at by some degree of consent. I don't want anybody in the chamber or watching this debate to imagine that Conway is simply arguing that you've got to lock it into some kind of status quo around which and about which there can be no movement or adjustment. One of the things about the British parliamentary system that I rather like is its ability to adjust. But the adjustment, as Madam Speaker Boothroyd observed in her interview with the Kingston Whig-Standard a couple of weeks ago, is ultimately going to be worked out between the parliamentary participants. Unilateral action by government on these matters is almost certainly going to produce a negative and unhappy result.

But I say again to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, don't kid yourselves and imagine that you can set some new technical, mechanical scheme in place and that's simply going to solve a lot of problems. I'm going to be a little bit of an apostate here and observe that I hear from friends on both sides of the aisle—I heard it in the throne speech; I heard it from certain electoral manifestos—about free votes. Do I need to say to friends here today that we have very substantial power now and we've had it for a long time? The question is, what is our will to reasonably and responsibly, as members of Parliament, exercise the power we've got? And I repeat, responsibly and reasonably exercise the power we've got.

In our system, the British system, it is useful to remember that one of the most powerful and important Prime Ministers of Great Britain in the 20th century was sent packing by her own caucus. Can you imagine that? At about the same time, a Labour Prime Minister of Australia was sent packing by his own government caucus.

I should also observe that doctrines like responsible government and concepts like cabinet are nowhere written in our Constitution. They are matters of convention. The office of the Prime Minister was not recognized in the Canadian Constitution until the patriation debate and the legislation of 1982. That comes as a big surprise to people. It's just a reminder of how convention-driven is our system. I don't think that's a bad



thing. But when it comes to the exercise of power, I say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, it ultimately turns on attitude and culture. Don't think for a moment that just some fancy new architecture around free votes, or whatever, is going to solve the problem.

That's why I took some time in designing this motion. I have no real intent in coming here today and rubbing anybody's nose in it. I've been in government. I know how mistakes happen. I made my share. I did some really stupid things that I wish I could take back.

I am also a child of minority government. I was elected here in 1975 in a Parliament that was the first minority Parliament in over 30 years. The second one came 18 months later, in June 1977.

One of the most painful days of my life occurred here in June 1976 when, in minority Parliament, we, the Liberals, then in third place, wanted to put and did put a want of confidence motion in the Davis government. We thought we had properly read the NDP intent, and we hadn't. I'll never forget the day, a warm, warm June evening, and the Speaker called the question: "All those opposed to Dr Smith's want of confidence motion in the Davis government." Those opposed: Dr Smith, Mr Nixon, Mr Conway, Mr Breithaupt and the list went on and the laughter went on longer.

I was in a committee yesterday, the public appointments committee, and I was thinking to myself, I wonder what this would be like in a minority government? I thought to myself the other day, would a Minister of Finance and a cabinet even think about a budgetary strategy like the one we saw on March 27 in a minority Parliament? I can tell you the answer to that is pretty straightforward. What is changed in a minority Parliament, of course, is that members have a shared responsibility.

I simply want to make the point today that I think what occurred was unfortunate and serious. I think it must be commented upon to the degree that, if it is not commented upon and resisted, then what does it say to the next government? It may not in fact be the current government. It could very well be a government of another party. The evidence is clear, I say to my colleagues on this side of the aisle, that whosoever controls office will be tempted by the same pressures that have driven this government. Make no mistake about it.

Dare I confess as well that I was part of a government where, in the spring of 1990, a caucus was polled, "Do you think there should be an early as opposed to a later election?" I think it's a matter of public record what the vote was and we all know what the result was. It's very difficult and painful for me to say this publicly. I have to admit to one obvious degree—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** My friend says, "What side are you on?" Good question. I hope, in a sensible way, I'm on the side of Parliament. That's my point. Parliament has important responsibilities, and so does government. I say to the former Minister of Finance what he knows and what we all know: only ministers of the crown can stand

here and put motions that occasion the spending of money. That's there for a reason. If I stand up and put a motion that involves the expenditure of money, I'm out of order. That's there for a reason. Those are executive responsibilities of the crown in Parliament. But remember: the crown has got to come to Parliament, which controls the purse, and only with the consent of Parliament can the crown and the cabinet spend money in ways that are voted, for purposes that are voted. An officer of Parliament, the Auditor General or the provincial auditor, at the end of the day, tells Parliament whether or not the appropriations are consistent with the parliamentary votes in response to ministerial requests. That's the system.

**1410**

I repeat to my friends opposite, government has important responsibilities and government has a right to expect, in reasonable circumstances, to move its agenda along and to govern in some sensible and responsible way. Parliament, however, has very important and fundamental responsibilities, and, I repeat, at the core of that responsibility for Parliament is the right of any Parliament to hold government responsible for what it does, and nowhere is that accountability function more central and more crucial than on money matters, the purse.

It's very clear from the standing orders what is intended by this whole system, and I'm not going to repeat myself on that matter. I simply want to say, Mr Speaker, I appreciate your ruling and I do know it falls to the House, as a group of members of Parliament, now to decide this question.

I repeat: what I am asking this House to do is essentially this. Let us affirm what should be very straightforward for all of us to affirm: that, as we have always done it, let us agree in the future that this Legislative Assembly has the undisputed right, here in this Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget. I think it is quite an agreeable, quite a straightforward recognition of a core value of the fundamental responsibility in a modern parliamentary system, and I have taken some care in drafting it. I simply submit to the House that I think it is quite supportable by people on both sides of the aisle because, as I say, it recognizes a reality that I thought everybody accepted. I offer it in that spirit, and I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the time.

**The Speaker:** Further debate? The member for Niagara Centre in the rotation.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** Thank you kindly, Speaker.

First, the New Democratic Party caucus wants to thank you, sir, for your careful consideration of this matter and your deliberations, which I am confident were not easy ones, which resulted in your ruling today.

Look, let's make this very clear. In effect, what has been found is not just a contempt for this Parliament but a contempt for the people of Ontario, a contempt for the taxpayers of this province, a contempt for every resident of this province, a contempt for every voter of this province. Regrettably, this contempt is not unpre-



cedented, in that it is perhaps, however unpleasant for Conservative members of this House, a most fitting end to their reign here at Queen's Park, because the contempt finding today, as clear as any finding could ever be—make no mistake about it—sums up eight years of Conservatives and Conservative rule at Queen's Park.

Speaker, I have an amendment to the motion moved by Mr Conway, and if I could have a page, I'll have that page deliver a copy of that amendment to the table. Thank you, Tyler. Take that to the Clerk, please.

**The Speaker:** Mr Kormos has moved an amendment which reads as follows:

"Be it further resolved that this assembly instruct the Premier to direct the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario to reimburse the taxpayers of Ontario, by payment to the consolidated revenue fund, for all costs associated with the presentation of its bogus budget outside the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, including, though not limited to, the communication hookups and associated costs for facilitating media coverage; all propaganda associated with the lead-up to, the actual presentation of, and the follow-up to the reading of the so-called budget speech; the costs incurred by all government ministries associated with the preparation of the production of this infomercial; and any costs of the venue at Magna International."

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. We support the proposition contained in—

**The Speaker:** Just a minute, please, while we confer.

I'm going to have to rule that amendment out of order, for two reasons. One, having read it closely, it is a separate proposition. Number two, the member will also know that it asks this House for a direct expenditure out of the consolidated revenue, which we're not allowed to do. So unfortunately, I'm not going to be allowed to allow the amendment. The member may continue.

**Mr Kormos:** Speaker, if you will—and I of course don't argue with the Speaker—it directs the Conservative Party to pay to the consolidated revenue fund. It doesn't direct any payments out of the consolidated revenue fund.

You see, what we believe—

**The Speaker:** Order. The Government House Leader.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** In hopes of clarification, I think it matters not, pay out or pay to; it's still a revenue issue with respect to funds, so therefore it is not in order.

*Laughter.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** And I appreciate I broke the member for Kingston up.

**Mr Kormos:** Look, the government could do a couple of things today to mitigate the position that it's in. It could stand up and apologize to this Parliament and to the people of Ontario.

The government could respect the Speaker's ruling and understand that this bogus budget exercise, this Bonnie and Clyde budget—Janet Ecker and Ernie Eves; while Bonnie and Clyde robbed banks, Janet and Ernie—you understand.

It's the consolidated revenue funds that have been cleaned out for the purpose of financing what was a partisan political exercise, a pre-election campaign stunt, and it's not isolated in and of itself. On a daily basis we witness millions of dollars of taxpayers' money being spent on glossy ads, be it along our highways, be it in glossy-paged magazines, be it on television, radio or in our local newspapers. Contempt is perhaps the mildest way one can characterize this government's attitude toward this Legislature and toward the people of Ontario.

So you see, we propose to you—and quite frankly, the government House Leader, the Premier or Mrs Ecker, the Minister of Finance herself, could stand up and apologize to assure us that the Conservative Party of Ontario will reimburse the taxpayers of Ontario for the cost of the not-inexpensive, by no-means-cheap public relations exercise up at Magna Corp back in March, which is of course the matter on which the Speaker very clearly found this government to be in contempt.

But you see, this contempt isn't isolated. This government's history at Queen's Park here in the province of Ontario has been a history of contempt. It was contempt that this government showed for residents of Ontario, for workers, for seniors living on retirement incomes, when it privatized and deregulated hydro, forcing hydro rates through the roof.

Oh, I understand they had Liberal collaborators in the course of that and continue to have this intimate relationship with the Liberal Party when it comes to hydro privatization and deregulation. But surely the process of privatizing and deregulating hydro is as contemptuous as anything that could be done—contempt for the people of this province, contempt for workers, contempt for seniors and contempt for students.

The government's efforts to sell off Hydro One and then somehow proclaim that it was for the public good—of course, the Liberals supported that plan too—what could be more contemptuous and contemptible?

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Last year the Conservatives were caught trying to give pro sports teams a \$10-million tax break. What contempt. Mind you, perhaps the most contemptuous thing was when Liberals and Conservatives collaborated and tried to sneak through this Legislature a 33% salary increase for MPPs, when lowest-income people, people on minimum wage, remain stuck at \$6.85 an hour and when people on ODSP benefits remain forced to live on sub-poverty levels of income. Again, what contempt for those workers, for those persons on ODSP, that the Liberals and Tories would want to sneak through a huge salary increase for themselves, leaving working people and persons on disability mired, stuck in abject poverty.

Of course, the Conservative introduction of the Taxpayer Protection Act—an oxymoron if there ever was one, a meaningless piece of legislation that they themselves violated just last year. The Conservatives demonstrated contempt once again for local democratic institutions when they overruled Ottawa city council and blocked ward boundary changes there.

The contempt this government has shown over the course of eight years for taxpayers' money when cabinet minister after cabinet minister is caught in late-night spending sprees at notorious and expensive bistros with bar tabs, hotel tabs and movie tabs, expenditures that no working person, never mind those who aren't working, would ever dare dream of, expenditures that for working women and men would require a significant lottery win—that's contempt as well.

So you see, Speaker, the contempt that you found, while itself the most legal type of contempt, which enabled you to make the finding that you did, and the clearest and most prima facie of contempts, isn't there in isolation. What concerns us is the disinterest that the Conservative members have for your ruling and in this debate. I'm looking forward to seeing Conservative members—I challenge them to stand up and speak to this motion. I suspect Conservative members have been instructed and whipped and scripted. "Get the message out," their House leader, their Premier and their whip have told them. I know what else they've been told. I can hear it now at caucus meetings, "Don't worry; Premier Eves will take you through that next election. We're going to cruise through."

This government has shown such disdain, such cruelty for so many people in our province:

—Its ongoing and persistent vilification of working women and men, of teachers, of seniors, of students.

—Tuition rates skyrocketing—150% or 160% increase in the last eight years alone, with deregulated tuitions encouraged by this government that resulted in University of Toronto Law School tuition of \$21,000 a year. That's tuition alone, and the promise of yet more to come. With this government's state of denial around the crisis of the double cohort, student after student, family after family and community after community won't find their way, notwithstanding—I've read the papers and somewhat bland assurances of certain university and college presidents—student after student, family after family and community after community won't access the community college or university that held out so much promise for those students, bright young people who have so much to offer and for whom there should be more promise but who are being denied that access to post-secondary education.

—This government's repeal of anti-scab legislation, one of the first acts it did—supported by the Liberals; I understand—this government demonstrated its contempt for working women and men and the struggles they have to engage in. Since the repeal of anti-scab legislation by this government—with the collaboration of the Liberal Party—we've witnessed more strikes, more lockouts, longer ones, and more risk to workers on their picket lines from the violence of scabs forcing their way through than we have in a long time in this province.

—This government's abandonment of workers when it comes to health and safety and the right of workers to refuse unsafe work and the right of workers to have workplace inspection by a live, real Ministry of Labour inspector.

—This government's contemptible disinterest in the revelation made by Wayne Samuelson of the Ontario Federation of Labour about a couple of weeks ago that the rather modest fines this government imposes on employers who kill or maim their workers in workplaces—\$100,000 or \$200,000 for a dead worker or a fraction of that for a maimed or crippled worker—those fines are but income tax deductions for those same companies. Do you understand what I'm saying, Speaker? A slaughtered worker's surviving workmates subsidize the payment of the rather pathetic fines that are imposed upon the employer after a conviction for causing that worker's death, because that fine is, in and of itself, tax deductible.

I would put to you that it would be a refreshing observation to be able to see government members stand up and show some contrition for the contempt this government showed, to show some regret. One should perhaps hope for no more than a mere acknowledgement that maybe it wasn't the smartest thing they'd ever done.

I'd be equally interested in having those members of cabinet—because I'm sure there are members of this government's cabinet—I watched their faces while the Speaker was reading his ruling. You could read the body language of the handful of cabinet ministers who recommended against the bogus Magna Corp budget presentation. Oh, the smugness on their faces; the little cartoon bubbles above their heads that said, "I told you so"; the little bubbles above their heads that said, "You wouldn't listen to me, would you?"

These are the same ministers who are calling upon their cabinet colleagues to call the election now so that at least there will be more than a mere handful of Tories returned—maybe they'll be able to salvage half a dozen seats—instead of waiting until the fall, which will conjure up memories perhaps of Conservative Kim Campbell's spectacular victory in her one and only election as Prime Minister of Canada.

It would be so refreshing and so noble—oh, but nobility is so absent—to see the Minister of Finance stand up and indicate that she never supported this proposition from the get-go. Indeed, if she did, she should stand up and resign, because, Speaker, you have made a ruling of contempt, a ruling which is unprecedented, because it was conduct that was unprecedented, a finding of contempt that is as clear and strong and certain as any finding could be. Surely an honourable Minister of Finance would resign in response to that—resign, or stand up and proclaim her innocence and tell us and tell the people of Ontario that she did everything she could to prevent this contempt from happening.

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I suspect she might well be capable of doing that, because it won't be the first time that Ms Ecker was bushwhacked by cabinet colleagues. I remember the day that the budget announced the funding by way of subsidies of private school student families. Ms Ecker looked like she had just plugged herself into a 220-volt outlet. You could see the hair curling and the smoke rising. She'd been bushwhacked. I saw her muttering—



I'm not about to suggest there were obscenities as she was walking down the hallway. I tell you, I'm not good at it, but there are certain words that all of us are sufficiently familiar with that when we read their lips we know what people are saying.

I suspect Ms Ecker had it done to her again. I suspect Ms Ecker was as blindsided and bushwhacked by this wacky idea to hold a bogus budget speech that was destined to dip this government into the hottest water they've been in since their election back in 1995—not that they're not used to hot water. But I tell you, this is absolutely boiling.

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** Who made that decision over there? Somebody is responsible.

**Mr Kormos:** Tell us who the brain trust is, the minions, your advisers, your \$1,000-a-day consultants. I say to the government, tell us who these \$1,000-a-day consultants are who told you to hold this bogus budget out at Magna Corp, because, by God, you should get your money back. The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations should be called immediately. You talk about doing a number on somebody. Those consultants who told you this was a clever thing to do—let us know who they are. Let us warn the people of Ontario so that nobody ever touches them—nobody ever goes near them again with a 10-foot pole.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Andersen.

**Mr Kormos:** Was it Andersen Consulting? I don't know. Let us know. Please, share.

At this point, it's not a matter of a couple of novenas and Hail Marys, my friends. There is a need for this government to truly come clean.

I regret that the balance of this debate over the next few days is going to demonstrate yet further contempt for this government, demonstrate further disdain by them for us and for the people of Ontario.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I have a great deal of respect for this institution and I have a great deal of respect for the honourable members who inhabit this institution. I have a great deal of respect for all the things that we are to do to protect the parliamentary tradition and the democratic process. I probably am one of the few—on two quick points—to have an understanding of and a respect for what the Speaker of the House must do in dealing with the operations of this place, because I actually had that job for three years. I took great pride in the fact that I felt I handled it in a very impartial, even-handed and fair way—I think always. I can't think of a single ruling or decision I made that was not based on what I felt were the rules, traditions and examples of a parliamentary process.

I believe that we have institutions—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I think I was, Mr Ruprecht. I appreciate the heckling, and I'm sure you're doing it to assist me; thank you.

I was, I believe, dealing with things in a fair and impartial manner. I found a *prima facie* case of contempt once in this House in dealing with an advertisement in the Ottawa Citizen, and much the same thing took place.

I think the paramount important thing that we must remember—having been a Speaker, knowing previous Speakers, knowing Deputy Speakers—is that we must be certain in our minds and in our beliefs of the impartiality of the Speaker. It's the place where we all have to go on occasion to know that we're going to get a fair hearing on the issues and concerns that are brought to this Legislature. Much like a judge who hears a case, you have to believe, when this judge hears that case, that there's an impartiality, a fairness, propriety, and know that there are no preconceived notions and no preconceived ideas that they bring to that decision.

I have read this very, very carefully. I want to make a couple of comments.

First, there was no contempt found with respect to there being out of order—the issue itself was orderly. The standing orders were not breached in any way, shape or form. I think they went to great lengths to say that.

As far as privilege, which is what the member stood on—

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** Contempt.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** —a contempt of privilege, I say to the House leader. I know, but listen. Contempt of privilege. It's not contempt with respect to what the Speaker ruled on; it was privilege. The Speaker ruled, in fact, that there was no contempt of privilege. The Speaker ruled that there was contempt through bringing disrespect to the Legislative Assembly. I appreciate that you may find that to be splitting hairs, and it may well be. I won't argue the case. It may well be. I'm not suggesting for a moment that the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has not done what he was supposed to do; he did. But let's be clear. Privileges: it wasn't a contempt. Orderliness: it wasn't out of order. It was, with respect, a disrespect of Parliament.

Let me say this. We have a very difficult situation on our hands now. We have a motion that's brought, we've decisions to take, and we'll have rulings in the future to determine what now will be considered a disrespect to Parliament. May I say that if this ruling were in place when the social contract was being done outside the House, my friends in the third party would have certainly been found in contempt. I will also say, on a number of occasions, if this ruling was in place when Mr Nixon was downstairs delivering his budget in 1988, he would certainly have been found in contempt.

You may argue, and I hear the arguments—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I say to the members opposite, I didn't interrupt your member when he spoke. I listened very carefully both to his submission and today. I ask for the same consideration.

The argument may be that circumstances can dictate results. I take great exception to the argument. Circumstances cannot dictate results. If it is contempt, if it is out of order, if it is a breach of privilege or brings disrespect to this House, it does so on the face of what it is. If a budget speech delivered anywhere else than this place brings disrespect to this House, it does so whether it's

downstairs or in Brampton. You can't square a circle in this place by suggesting to all members that the target now will move depending on what the Speaker deems to be disrespectful when the results are absolutely, actually, exactly the same.

By way of example, if the situation were in 1988 that the Treasurer couldn't bring a budget because of a filibuster of the opposition, that happens all the time.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Not under your rules.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** How, in fact, you get around filibusters with the opposition was through negotiations.

**Ms Churley:** You changed the rules.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I say to you, Ms Churley, I listened carefully to Mr Kormos, and I'm asking you to give me the same decency.

And I say to the members opposite, upon reading the ruling, we are faced with a situation that there is so much interpretation for new rulings to come from the Speaker depending on what that Speaker believes. For instance, I say to the members of this House, if you have a \$200-million hospital announcement in eastern Ontario—\$200 million is a fairly substantial sum of money—if you go to eastern Ontario to make that announcement, are you in contempt of the House because you brought disrespect to the House, because the members of the House didn't know first?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** That's not what he said.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I respectfully suggest to you that may not be what he's saying, but that will have to be ruled on because interpretation will be that's what's being said. And what is that number? I don't know. Would the social contract have fallen under that? My suggest is yes. Billions of dollars announced outside this Legislature would be deemed, in my opinion, considering this ruling, to bring disrespect to the House. Why? Because the members of this Legislature did not know first that we were spending billions of dollars in this fashion.

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Now, was it wrong to do what we did? Excellent debate. You say yes; we say no. You had a good debate and we had calls and conversations, and the media sat here, they wrote about it, they talked about it. It was fully debated, excellent debate.

**Interjection:** Where?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** In the media, outside and around. *Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I appreciate, Mr Caplan, that this is a political argument. I know that. I'm doing my best because I listened carefully to your Mr Conway. I'm asking for the same.

The request was about whether that was a debate. Sure it's a debate. It could have been brought as an opposition day motion or a private member's motion. It could have been brought in any way if you wanted to have it debated in the House. But the question all parliamentarians now have to ask themselves is this: "Is it a debate or is it

contempt?" Because I suggest to you that with this ruling today, we are going to have a lot of rulings from the Speaker with respect to what's contempt and what isn't, and if you think you can rely on practice and precedent like in 1998, you can't. It's off. Practice and precedent and being in order no longer matter, because the authority rests with the Speaker, and I suppose so it should be. I would not question the Speaker's authority nor his decision-making.

I only caution all parliamentarians, all honourable members, to understand: as you go out and speak to the media, as Mr Kormos just did, in a political way, stand up and talk about a whole series of issues, understand that in the future we need 500 rulings now to deem what is contempt and what isn't. Simply put, we have to find what each Speaker considers to be disrespect and what they don't. Warner decided the social contract wasn't. Edighoffer decided Nixon didn't. Carr decided the government did.

That's the rub. That's the circle that needs to be squared. Because as far as I can tell, Edighoffer and Warner ruled one way and Carr ruled another—Speaker Carr; I'm sorry. Speaker Carr, Speaker Edighoffer and Speaker Warner.

I'm not suggesting the Speaker's wrong. He's not. He must be right. I was Speaker. I knew I was right. I'm sure Speaker Carr knows he's right as well. But before you go off, gladly extolling the virtues of this decision and chastising the government, be forewarned, because it's forearmed. If the NDP are in power next time, or the Liberals, or us again, this is a very important read for all of you, because you're going to have to decide when making announcements in this province where the threshold begins and where the threshold ends. Why?

**Interjection:** Here.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You say, "Here." I say you've never had—I don't mean this in a demeaning way. You've never sat here. Once you've sat here, I say to my friend Conway, it's a very different picture than when you sit there. I suggest you go out in a quiet moment with my friend Conway and have a little discussion about the differences between sitting here and sitting there.

**Mr Gerretsen:** We have.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Well, maybe you haven't had this discussion. I encourage my friend Conway to have that discussion with as many of you as he can. Because the world turns a little bit differently on this side than it does on that side. I'm not saying that you're not fit to sit, that you're not fit to govern. Of course you are. You're honourable members. I'm just saying the decision will be perplexing. That's what I'm saying.

There's a difficulty we have with respect to the amendment offered up by Mr Conway. The difficulty we have with the amendment of Mr Conway is this: if the amendment is adopted, as I read it, there will be no lock-ups—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** May I have the amendment, please? Does anyone have the amendment? I can only go



by what the amendment says. I'm not suggesting for a moment that Mr Conway had any political motivation to move this amendment the way he did; I'm just telling you, literally read, this is what it means.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** A motion. I apologize. A motion: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly and Parliament assembled to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

Do you know what—and I'm not suggesting he's trying to be political at all; I'm just suggesting to you that as it's read, it has never happened that way, ever. It didn't happen that way when you were in power, my friends the socialists, and it didn't happen that way when you were power, my friends the Liberals. It didn't happen that way. It never has happened that way. There are budget lock-ups. There are all kinds of things. Many, many hundreds and hundreds, potentially thousands of people see the budget before us—thousands. So that's going to make it very difficult to adopt this motion.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** That's disingenuous.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I don't mean to be disingenuous. I mean to be pragmatic. Pragmatically I suggest to you, this is a difficult motion and, as I said, the world turns differently on this side than that. This makes it difficult for us to adopt, because we've never done it that way. You wouldn't have budget lock-ups. You wouldn't have the media in budget lock-ups; you wouldn't have McGuinty and Hampton doing their budget statements before the budget is released and announced in this House. It's very difficult.

So it's going to be very difficult to accept. Now, maybe Mr Conway will amend it; I don't know. Maybe there will be other amendments offered; I don't know.

Just from a pragmatic point of view, this is difficult. Mr Kormos's I think was out of order, so rightly ruled by the Speaker, because it was, in my opinion, totally politically motivated, without any benefit to the Legislative Assembly itself, or hopefully a better operation, but I'd expect no less.

So I think you're going to have to deal with this in a very interesting way, House, parliamentarians. I think you've received a ruling today that is, by its very nature, earth-shattering, curious, perplexing—very, very difficult. It's going to make changes to how we do business in here, fundamental and structural changes that I don't think any of us can imagine. Any ruling of this magnitude by the Speaker would always do that. But I think you should understand that we are going to have to get clarification on what can and can't be done inside and outside this Legislature, what can and what cannot be done when the Legislature is not sitting—

**Mr Gerretsen:** Hear, hear.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Agreed—what can be spent, what can't be spent. What about an emergency, folks? What about SARS? What about this government's action on SARS? I'm asking for your attention. What about this

government's action on SARS and the detailing of expenditures by the Minister of Health during that very difficult time—emergency expenditures that weren't dealt with in any way, shape or form in the budget etc? What about those? The House wasn't in session. Does he have the authority to go out and spend tens of millions of dollars, making the announcement anywhere he wants? Well, I'm not sure, after this ruling today.

**Mr Duncan:** You're wrong.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Well, maybe I'm wrong, Mr Duncan. I appreciate the fact that you suggest I'm wrong. Very often you suggest I'm wrong and ultimately, do you know what? I find myself to be right. So let's just work our way through and see.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You may say I'm wrong. I appreciate that, and the Speaker has ruled. We'll see what the Legislature thinks and see who's right or wrong.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

So I wonder if that's allowed.

**Mr Duncan:** Yes.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You say yes, but you know, with great respect, it has nothing to do with what you think. It has everything to do with what he thinks.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You know, Mr Speaker, I appreciate the help I'm getting from the House leader—

**The Speaker:** Order. I would ask all members—please.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** But it really doesn't matter what you think; it matters what the Speaker thinks. And if the Speaker thinks that spending a certain amount of money is out of order, a contempt, through bringing disrespect to Parliament because we weren't the first people to see this expenditure, then you're in contempt. Mr Clement could have been found in contempt; I'm certain the Treasurer under the NDP, Mr Laughren, would have been found in contempt; and I bet my bottom dollar if this ruling were around when Mr Nixon was reading his budget, Mr Nixon was in contempt.

So I look at these probably a little bit differently than some, because I can look down the road and see how this is going to affect decisions of future administrations and future announcements.

**1450**

The Speaker's ruling, right now, has left a number of unanswered questions. Whether you think it or you don't think it, and whether you think they're unanswered or you don't think they're unanswered, matters a hill of beans. It doesn't matter what Kormos, Marchese, Curling or Duncan think is in order, or myself or Hudak on this side; it matters what the Speaker thinks. I thought, as a government House leader, that if you had a practice or a precedent that dictated an approach, it was in order and not in contempt, but the fact is, it wasn't.

In closing, I will make one argument with respect to difference of process. I'll bring two examples: Mr Nixon

in 1988 and Mr Laughren in 1993. With Mr Nixon in 1988, the claim was that he had no choice. It was considered in order because he had no choice. So he wasn't in contempt. Mr Laughren, in 1993, had a choice. He chose not to do it here. It was considered in order, and there was no contempt. I operated on two fundamental approaches: when you had a choice, you weren't in contempt; when you didn't have a choice, you weren't in contempt. I presumed, then, that we wouldn't be held in contempt. My presumption was wrong.

We'll need a significant number of rulings to determine what the threshold is and how it is met. We, as parliamentarians, will have to determine that with the help of the Speaker. But let's be very careful about what has happened today. What has happened today, for future administrations, is going to be a very, very, very difficult process to unravel.

**Mr Duncan:** It is with no joy that we debate this today. I want to begin by saying to my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, whom I first had the honour and privilege of working with as a staffer as far back as 1985, that he displayed in his presentation to this House—and over the course of the last few weeks, I've had the honour to work under his tutelage—the grace, eloquence, integrity and intelligence that he's always reflected in his public and private life. This is the cap of what has been a truly remarkable career in public life in Ontario. We're grateful to you, sir, on this side of the House, certainly for the guidance you've given us.

The Speaker had a very difficult decision to make. When the government first announced it, I think, like many members of the House, I was personally just shocked. It took me several hours just to reflect on what they were doing, or trying to do, and why they were doing it. As we got further into it, the phones started ringing. Surprisingly, it was average Ontarians. I must say to the people of Ontario, as somebody who has an enormous respect for this institution and its history, I was astounded, if you will, by the outpouring from average people. I think, Mr Speaker, in your ruling you referenced the volume of calls that all of us had. I was certainly one of them.

Last year, I had the opportunity to travel to Westminster, to the new Scottish Parliament, to the new Welsh Parliament and to the Quebec National Assembly and have an in-depth look at those institutions. One of the things I came away with, surprisingly, was just how advanced our little House is, how well it works, how it has evolved its own particular culture, rules and regulations and how, in my view, they are superior to many others.

The Speaker's finding is a *prima facie* case; that is, on the face of it there is a contempt. It is up to this House to determine whether or not the contempt actually happened, as is appropriate. This House has primacy on these matters.

The government House leader argued about Mr Conway's motion. I should tell you that, in anticipation of this, we didn't just sit down and write that motion out on

a matchbox. We consulted authorities, both in writing as well as verbally. Experts from around the world offered their opinion on this budget. Indeed, a former Speaker of the British House of Commons opined that this sort of thing could never happen in the mother Parliament, Westminster, without there being a full riot.

I say to the government House leader, yes, this is a momentous ruling, and I sensed by the length of the ruling and by the detail of the ruling that a good deal of thought went into it by Mr Speaker and by those who advise him. And I say to the government House leader that we on this side often get up on contempt and more often than not find ourselves frustrated by the fact that there is no contempt found. In that sense, absolutely nothing has changed.

I say to the government House leader, I parsed the Speaker's ruling very carefully. I would say that for about 85% of the ruling he put very careful conditions around the contempt that he found so as not to leave the door wide open. He dealt with every issue the government House leader raised in his initial response to the contempt that was brought before this House by Mr Conway in what I felt was a very systematic and thorough fashion. So indeed, government members and the opposition will bring points of privilege dealing with contempt, I'm sure, and future Speakers will be called upon to rule, and I trust those Speakers to do the appropriate thing.

Will this prevent members of the treasury bench from doing announcements about hospitals or whatever somewhere else? Absolutely not. That argument is sillier than the argument the government House leader put in response to Mr Conway's initial point of privilege in this House. What this does, in my view, for the first time in a long time, is it reasserts the importance of this institution and its noble history.

We have seen a diminution—and, dare I say, my federal brethren in Ottawa are just as guilty as any government of undermining our parliamentary history and institutions. I've looked at what's happened there and what's gone on, and I say to them, "Shame on you," as well, for what's happened. That's what really took me aback by the comments of our people, the people in our ridings, the people in the media who contacted us to express their disdain for the government's so-called budget. I see this as an opportunity for the House to reassert itself, and to reassert its primacy and its rightful place in our society.

Let's review for a few minutes some of the things that have gone on in here since 1997.

The standing orders have been amended 72 times. The government House leader spoke of filibuster. Well, the Harris-Eves government has made a filibuster virtually impossible in this House. That's gone. Those days are gone. You can debate the relative merits of filibuster if you like, but it's no longer really an option.

Since 1995, this Legislature has sat an average of 78 days per year, or 21% of the time. This year, our Christmas break lasted until the end of April—138 days. In-



deed the government, in perhaps what I consider to be the most unbelievable reaction, said that they had to bring their budget forward at Magna because the House wasn't sitting, forgetting that the day before they had prorogued the House. In fact, they had the authority to sit; they simply chose not to.

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You could pass a bill in this place in about five sitting days—a week, according to our calculations. I remember that once 400 amendments were tabled at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and we were expected to vote on them at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** Government amendments.

**Mr Duncan:** Government amendments. We didn't have a chance to read them, let alone scrutinize them. In my view, that was an utter contempt; no Speaker would find that, because in fact they were in order.

Mr Speaker, the truth of the matter is that you have very limited powers; you were very careful to say that. In fact, you've only found a *prima facie* case. It is up to this House and indeed up to a government to show respect for this institution. Dare I say that successive governments, at the plotting of backroom strategists, have progressively undermined this institution? I think my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke referred to that. Mr Speaker, I think you implied it. I think I read interviews with you where you said that.

No public hearings—let's talk about public hearings for a few minutes and what has gone on, because the government House leader is proud of his record on that account. Fewer than half the bills introduced by this government since 1999 have received public hearings—fewer than half. Granted, some of them probably didn't merit public hearings; I accept that. But you've used time allocation on budget bills; you closed debate on budget bills. That is a sad commentary on this government.

If we are going to make this institution relevant, if we are going to keep it relevant, if we are going to see voter turnout go from somewhere in the 50s back to where it was 20 or 30 years ago where up to 70% of people would actually vote, then we're going to have to keep this place relevant, and I accept responsibility for that as well. I accept that some tactics which are used on all sides of the House bring it into disrepute. Mr Speaker has had to call me to order on a number of occasions where I have been, frankly, unparliamentary, and I regret that. Because what I learned in all this—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Duncan:** They still joke over there. It's cute. You try to have a serious discussion, and they joke. It's just a big joke. Well, I would suggest that those who make a joke of it are the joke. And I would suggest that the comments we heard out in the hall about independence of the Speaker and so on ought to stop.

If you choose to vote against this motion, so be it. I can tell you, this motion was carefully vetted by a number of authorities to ensure that it would pose no risk to this House or no risk, particularly, to members on any side of the House.

One can understand the frustration that members opposite must feel. They have taken the proverbial beating publicly and over time, and now they're forced off their agenda yet again, for a period of time we can't quite determine, to have to face the music.

When the reaction started coming in, I was astounded that the government didn't correct its own decision at the time. I am told by those in a position to know that there was considerable debate within about that and that in fact they deliberately chose to continue on with their strategy.

So I see this ruling as significant, as a turning point. The budget itself—if there's a silver lining to any cloud, the people of this province finally stood up and said, "Enough." And I think in saying, "Enough," they were saying that to the opposition as well. How about better debate? How about quality debate?

I've been reading the biography of Churchill. A hundred years ago, members' speeches were published on the front pages of newspapers. Not to say that they didn't have their moments back then; the world is obviously a very different place.

This is a noble institution. All members are honourable, in my view, regardless of their political stripe. They have been sent here by their constituents. They were elected in a fair election and they have the right to put their positions, under a certain set of rules that the Speaker must interpret narrowly. This motion gives us the opportunity to build the institution, if you will, to enhance it, to turn the corner on what has probably been 15 years of diminution of its role, of its responsibilities—you know, simple things.

In the old days, if the government had a sessional day, the opposition had a question period. That changed. By the way, our rules are still fairly generous in terms of question period, in terms of the opposition's ability to question the government.

Personally, I would like to see a lot more work done in committee. There are examples in the Commonwealth, in Australia and Great Britain, where in my view committee work is much more important. Hopefully we will have the goodwill in this House to find those opportunities.

But I suggest to you that any government that would take something as fundamental as the budget and give the speech outside of the House—anywhere, whether it's at Magna or McDonalds, at a university or somewhere else—has shown a contempt, and there is a *prima facie* case.

Mr Conway has carefully crafted a motion that I could not begin to understand how the government could defeat. I would submit to the government, and I do so here, in public, that if changes can be brought to that to make it palatable, we certainly want to talk about that. It's a very sad day, but it's a good day because we have turned the corner.

The last thing I wanted to do—and we were careful. The government House leader got up and spoke about the Speaker's ruling and talked about privilege and contempt. You know, Mr Conway didn't just throw that little speech together. Because he is such an eloquent and good

public speaker, it may have appeared that that just sort of rolled out, but I can tell you, we chose our words very carefully. The written submissions that were submitted to Mr Speaker were not scribbled on the back of a matchbook as he was racing back from Barry's Bay. They were done in the context of discussions with noted authorities. We asked the Speaker to rule on contempt quite deliberately, because it is a broader category and because in our view the narrow definitions of privilege were too narrow to focus on. Clearly the standing orders were not the right way to go.

It was funny, when the finance minister did announce her budget speech, I had actually looked at the history of budgets and when or not they could be delivered. Do you know what prompted me to do that? This is why I say this is on a non-partisan basis. The federal government went close to two years without a budget. That really struck me, as a parliamentarian. How do you do that? How do you get away with it? I was quite surprised to learn that in fact the rules are very silent about that. We can get into the whole argument of convention and so on, but it's not the Speaker's place to rule on that. But it is something that we should reflect on as members.

Mr Conway has put a motion that in my view allows us the opportunity to reassert the primacy of this place and to do so in a fashion that will end this debate once and for all and will reflect well on all of us. I would submit that if the government members have a problem with the wording, tell us how we can fix it and show us how we can fix it.

In your throne speech there are a couple of items about the role of members. They are items, by the way, that we put forward at the committee and we're quite pleased that the government has taken them on. They're not the list of what we wanted. They're not the items we have addressed in our campaign document. I won't refer to that beyond that in this House, because I think this is too serious a debate to really start getting into some partisan gamesmanship. But I submit to you that all of us working together can really make this place function. I don't know that I want to return to the days of filibuster, but I certainly would like more opportunity for the opposition to hold the government to account, which is ultimately what our role is. It's sad that we can't do that.

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Arbitrary time allocation motions that take away third reading debate—one of the things the government did in 1999 that I applauded at the time and I signed off on was sending bills to committee after first reading. We've seen in a couple of instances how well that can work. Unfortunately, we don't do it enough. The movement in Australia and other parts of the Commonwealth, by the way, is ideas to committee before first reading, white papers and so on, which allows a more thorough debate. From the government's perspective there's some advantage because of the old argument about trial balloons and so on without fully committing yourself. There are lots of things going on around the Commonwealth that we can adopt here that can make this place work better, not so much for us but for the people we represent.

The Speaker said very clearly in his ruling: this is a place where there should be debate, where there should be disagreement, where tempers should get flared. I often think of this as the kitchen table of the province. It's where we come together and talk about the issues of the day. We will differ, and that's quite appropriate. It's sad what's happened in this institution; it's sad what's happened to our parliamentary institutions over the last 15 years. While I'm saddened by today, I also see it as an opportunity to turn the corner and begin to redress some of what's gone on.

Mr Speaker had a difficult ruling. It is a major and significant ruling. I submit it is an appropriate ruling. It is a ruling that will not, in my view, undermine this institution's legitimacy or ability to carry on business, nor the government's. It's a very carefully crafted ruling that I suspect will be referenced by many Speakers in the future, not only here in this Legislature but likely elsewhere. In conclusion, I say to the government, I urge you to look carefully at our proposed resolution, and if you have problems, let us know and let's see if we can't find wording that will work for everybody.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce a group from Toronto East General Hospital who are here today to study our parliamentary democracy.

**The Speaker:** We welcome our friends. Further debate?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance):** Welcome to those who have come to hear this debate today.

I certainly appreciate the importance of what's being discussed, the debate that is occurring today. It is always a very interesting, worthwhile experience to hear and listen when the member for Etobicoke Centre and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke are debating issues of importance here in this chamber. I know the Speaker has given his views on the situation. That is his role. The House, of course, is now debating this issue and we will see where that debate takes us.

The government House Leader has spoken in his usual eloquent fashion about the process, about the Speaker's comments, about putting forward the government's position on this, in terms of the process. There are many valid points that he has made about the decision and about what has occurred. I don't wish to elaborate on his procedural comments, but I do wish to make a couple of points on process before getting into some other matters.

First of all, one of the things that has concerned me is that the decision by the government to present a budget speech in a place other than this location has been portrayed as somehow disrespect for the traditions of this chamber. I would respectfully disagree with that assessment. I understand there are very strong views about that, and that people's views disagree on that, and I'll say a few more points on that. One of the interesting points about the Liberals' resolution, or motion as they've put it forward, is that they talk about the budget being first presented to this chamber. With due respect, that has never actually occurred for many years. The process—



and again, it's not in the House rules—as it has existed, and certainly as it has existed with this government, is for all members of the House, staff of members of the House on many occasions, the media and representatives of stakeholders and groups who advocate on behalf of many good causes in this province to have access to the budget, all of the budget information and all of the ministry officials whose advice and expertise help a government put together that budget. They have access in the pre-budget lock-ups, before the public does.

That is an important process, because if this motion, as it is worded, were to pass, it would mean that the only time the opposition would have an opportunity to review and hear that would be the moment the finance minister opens his or her mouth. I would suggest that if I were a member of the opposition, a member of this caucus or a member of the media, I would find that extremely difficult. That would limit the ability for people to hold government accountable, because they wouldn't have the opportunity to examine the documents and the numbers, to ask the tough questions of the minister or officials. That would be an opportunity that would be lost. I respect that there are a number of points members are going to be making about delivering a speech in this chamber, but I think that other accountability that occurs around a budget is equally important.

The budget is more than just simply the speech, the words that are written. The budget is also the documents, the budget papers. There are many, and actually I never looked up how many, but we have 186 pages of additional documents that are also part of the budget. That is information that is never read in the House. That is information that is provided in the budget lock-up for all members of the House, staff, media and representatives of stakeholders. That is a very important process, and I don't think we want to lose that, because that is part of government being held accountable, of people being able to judge the decisions that they make.

What also happens around a budget is the pre-budget consultations. That process is important, too. The standing committee of the Legislature—all three parties represented on that—goes out around the province, has hearings and listens to what people have to say. For this budget, as Minister of Finance, I went around the province as well, to 17 different communities. I heard from over 1,300 individuals and sought their advice and their input in designing this budget. I think that is an equally important process in developing a good budget and a good budget process.

There will be legislation to implement this budget that will be debated in this House, as it should be, and all members of all three parties will have an opportunity to put their case, to debate, to argue and to vote as they see fit—or as their party whips have them see fit over there—on this legislation. There will be opportunities for further discussion and debate with the budget motion, the estimates process, the committees, the debates and votes on estimates and the vote on interim supply. All of those procedures are part of a budget, as they should be. All of those procedures are being observed, as they should be.

The Speaker himself noted that all of the papers and everything have been put on the record, filed, as appropriate, as helpful, to make sure that all members have the opportunity to do their job as elected representatives in this House.

So I think it is important to recognize that while there is a debate about the actual presentation of the speech—and as I said, I respect and I understand that there are strong views on that matter among many people. I myself in my constituency, as we all did, spent considerable time talking and debating and discussing it with citizens who cared enough about their democracy to call us up to express their views. I had people who called up with views on both sides: whether it was a good thing, a good idea, a new initiative, a new way to communicate to people about what was happening and what the government was doing; and those who disagreed and felt that it should be delivered in this chamber. So I respect those views.

But I think it's also important to recognize that as MPPs here we have responsibilities that go beyond this chamber. As MPPs, we are out meeting with constituents, talking with constituents, going to committee hearings, doing all of those things that are also part of the job that is represented in this chamber. That will continue to be something that occurs around this budget, as it will occur around all of the government's decisions. The members of the opposition engage in these activities as well in their role as MPPs and in their role as representing their parties' views here in this place. The tradition in this place, in this particular chamber, is one aspect, and it is an important aspect, and I understand and certainly appreciate the strong views that have been expressed on it.

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There is something else, though, that I think we all should appreciate as well, which is that as we here as MPPs in this chamber are focusing on an important process, are focusing on traditions of this particular chamber, there is another world outside this door, another world of people who go to work every day, who raise their children, work hard and put back into their community, and their lives revolve around a very different kind of process than what we have here. For them, what is also important is not simply the processes we follow here. Yes, those are important, but for them what is equally important—and based on the conversations I've had, I would say even more important in some cases—is the substance of what we do here, the decisions we make on behalf of the people we represent. I think in this discussion, looking at the substance of the budget and the substance of the government's decisions is equally important to what's at issue here and what we are considering.

That is something that, as Minister of Finance—and as I know and as my colleagues do, we take that responsibility as government very, very seriously. That was why we spent the time we did on the pre-budget consultations. It was why we went out and asked the questions, as we did on the throne speech. Because that is part of the job

we do, to seek that advice, to go out to people and say, "Here's what we believe in; here are the values that are important to us," things like balanced budgets, for example, and tax relief and helping our students to learn better in our schools, and having the courage and the commitment to restructure a health care system that was in desperate need of it. Those are some of the values and things that have driven us, and it is important for us to be out there talking about that, communicating that to the public and hearing people's views back. Because government doesn't always get it right when they make those decisions, and our government, like every government, has made those adjustments based on the input and the feedback we've received in those consultations. So the substance of what is in that budget is also exceedingly important, for the folks who are listening today or who are reading or following this debate in the future.

For us, the tax relief that is in this budget is extremely important. For hard-working families, having to pay less money to the government is a very important initiative, a very important support for them. So a budget that relieves another 45,000 modest-income Ontarians from paying any Ontario income tax is an important matter of substance for those 45,000 individuals. The tax relief for seniors that will give our seniors on average \$475 in tax relief—

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** How much does Frank Stronach get?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —for the 945,000 seniors who are going to benefit from that—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We'll have order in here. I'll warn the member from Hamilton East once more.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** For the 945,000 seniors who are going to benefit from that, that's an important substance to them as well, and we can't lose sight of that in the discussions we have today.

The steps we're taking to help our seniors in health care, for example: the Minister of Health has been out making announcements, putting initiatives in place that are going to help our seniors. More procedures for cataract surgery, for example, were part of the budget announcement as well. A strategy to help our seniors deal with osteoporosis—and I know many of us have members of our families who are facing such challenges as they get older. So that's an important part of substance that was in this budget as well.

We're talking about the relief and help for our small business community, who help generate the jobs that provide the growth and the prosperity that allow us to enjoy the democratic traditions, the democratic society that we have here. That's part of it as well. As we can see around the world, democracies flourish with prosperity, with jobs, with growth. That is also equally our responsibility as government to do what we can do to make that happen, to encourage that, to support that. That was also part of what was in this budget.

Helping our young people to improve, to learn better, was also a very important initiative in this budget. New investments in our schools to help our students learn

better, to support good teachers doing excellent teaching as they wish to do when they go into teachers' college to dedicate their life to teaching, helping our young people access post-secondary institutions: colleges, universities, apprenticeship training, all of those are important initiatives as well. Again, the budget spoke to that, and spoke to the concern that parents have had about whether their son or daughter would have a place in a college or a university. We know how important that education is to the future success of an individual. The statistics are very clear. The budget spoke to that with new investments to deal with what's called the double cohort situation to make sure that there are spaces there; 135,000 new spaces are going to be in place because of the investments that have been in this budget. I think that's an important aspect of what was in this budget as well. Tax relief, new investments for health, new investments for schools, new investments for infrastructure to make sure that our water systems, our sewer systems, our roads, our bridges, our transit systems are also meeting the needs of the communities: that was also very much part the budget initiatives that we talked about.

I think one of the other things that it's important to recognize was timing of the budget. There was an important commitment made by the Premier—a commitment that was important to our funding partners, to those that run our hospitals, that run our schools, that have said to many governments that finding out halfway through their school year or their fiscal year, or whatever their financial year is, what the revenues are, what the grants are that the government is giving them is exceedingly difficult. It's very hard for them to plan ahead, to be accountable, to do the quality job that so many of our doctors, our nurses, our teachers, our professors, our administrators want to do on behalf of the respective publics they serve and represent. One of the things they had asked for was to have earlier announcements, to have a budget that gave them that information earlier in the year, which this budget did. We met the Premier's commitment to have that budget out earlier. It has never happened in Ontario for many years that we have had that information out as early as we were able to do it and not only before the end of the fiscal year, which was an important improvement in timing, but also multi-year commitments for our funding partners so that they know, not just this year but next year and the year after that what the funding commitments are, so they can plan better, they can serve and support our students better, they can treat our patients better, they can deal with the responsibilities that they hold. That was another important point.

What is also important about the substance of the budget that has been presented, that the documents have been filed, that the legislation will help implement if passed by this House, was the fact that it carries forward with another important commitment that we have made since 1995, and that was the commitment to stop the deficit financing we had seen done by other governments that had left us, in 1995 when we were elected, with an



almost \$11-billion deficit to deal with, where the government of the day was spending \$1 million more an hour than it was taking in, every day of the week, every week of the year, adding more and more debt to our children and to our grandchildren.

One of the important commitments, perhaps one of the most important commitments in our economic plan, was to stop that, was to bring down that deficit and start paying down debt. In the substance of this budget, that is indeed what we did, by tabling our fifth consecutive balanced budget—something that we've not seen occur in Ontario since 1908—to finish meeting our commitment for debt repayment in this mandate for \$5 billion, which this budget dealt with; keeping tax relief going; keeping jobs in the economy going; keeping investments for our schools, for our hospitals, for infrastructure that supports our strong and safe communities.

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So all of that substance that was in this document, all of those details that are in this document, are very much a part of the budget and the budget process, even though they are not read word for word in this chamber, ever.

It's important that government be held accountable. The member for Windsor-St Clair was talking about the importance of government being accountable here in this process and in this chamber, and we indeed are. For example, in my travels when I have met with American politicians and representatives, they are amazed at the question period process we have here in Ontario, where any member of the opposition can stand up and ask the Premier a question on any issue and that here we do that for an hour. This is the longest question period in Canada. In Britain, which some call the mother of all Parliaments, the Prime Minister shows up once a week for about 15 minutes, as I recall. Here we have question period every day the House sits for an hour, where we have the opportunity to question all of the representatives. We have that opportunity here. That's an important part of accountability, of the parliamentary democracy that we have here in Ontario, and it is very strong and thriving.

Believe me, in terms of the people who talk to us, who are in our constituency office, who walk up to us on the street, who have views, who take the time to call, as they did over this particular issue—and I have thanked all of them; even those that I may well have disagreed with, I thanked them for the fact that they have cared enough for their democracy, they have cared enough for their communities to express their view, to participate, to take part.

So I would submit that democracy, parliamentary democracy, representative government here in Ontario is very important and it is also very strong and flourishing here at Queen's Park.

But I think all of us must remember that that process, as important as it is, must never cause us to lose sight of the substance of the decisions we make, the content of the debate that we have here, because at the end of the day, for Ontario's families, for individuals who are out

there, that makes so much difference to the quality of their life.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** I just wanted to remind some members that the House rules do not allow talking back and forth. They do allow, if you want to talk to somebody, to get up out of your seat, walk across, sit down beside them and do it in an orderly fashion. That's once.

**Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's):** We can't talk across to each other but we can debate when it is our time to speak, and I just want to say a couple of things in response to what has been said by the Minister of Finance and the government House leader.

For me, the chief problem with this *prima facie* contemptuous budget of 2003 is that all those things the finance minister was putting forth were tainted because it wasn't an official budget; it was something else.

I say to the government House leader as well that he suggested that somehow Speaker Carr's decision taints all that happens in the province of Ontario and everything that the government does. That's certainly not the way I read the decision of the Speaker. In particular, I should say to the Minister of Finance and the government House leader, the whole point is it's a budget; it's different. Yes, we may not like the fact that ministerial statements sometimes don't happen; they happen out there in a press conference. And yes, Speaker Carr has said in various venues that he's not a fan of that. He has certainly never ruled them out of order. We've attempted to have them ruled out of order, but they haven't been ruled out of order. The whole point is that it's the budget, and the budget is different. The budget is different for historical reasons, and they have been covered eloquently and excellently by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, by our Speaker and also by the official opposition House leader.

I also say to the government House leader, a former Speaker, that I heard what he said with respect to allegations, I think, of impartiality with respect to Speaker Carr, and the suggestion of prejudgment. I have two things to say on that. Firstly, nowhere, never, did Speaker Carr in any of his public statements or his private statements ever speak to the issue of this *prima facie* contempt motion. He may have done his job, in my view, as a servant of Parliament to defend our parliamentary democracy and our traditions, and yes, he was critical of the executive council of the government of the day, but he never spoke to the contempt motion. In that sense there is no prejudgment whatsoever.

Secondly, we know a particular Speaker, and if you want to put it another way, a particular judge, although as I'll say in a moment the Speaker's role is extremely different from that of an arbiter or a judge—we know there are judges on the Supreme Court of Canada who have given speeches and judgments and we know where they fall on particular issues. Does that mean that they are somehow partial, that they are not rendering justice, that we know what their position has been in the past? Of course not.

I believe Speaker Carr was doing his job, in this House and outside this House. Outside this House he was acting as the defender of Parliament. He is accountable to this House. MPPs put him in that chair and ultimately he is accountable to MPPs. Speaker Carr is there to facilitate the business of the House. He's not there to act as a judge. He is there, yes, to be non-partisan. We know he was elected on the ticket of Mike Harris and he sits in the Progressive Conservative caucus, but he doesn't go out there and engage in partisan activities outside or inside this House. We know that and he fills that role. I think he spectacularly filled his role as the facilitator of business in this House and the defender of Parliament. Would he have preferred to have done it from his chair as Speaker of the House, through the House proceedings? Of course he would have, I'm sure. But we didn't have that opportunity and that was the whole point, that this was taking place outside the House. As such, I think the comments from the government House leader suggest a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the Speaker of Parliament. I am surprised that he, of all people, would make that mistake.

As to the motion itself, and the extraordinary case that was made last week, the ruling that has been made and the speeches that have been made thus far, I say to Mr Conway's point and the Minister of Finance's point—I think the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke addressed her comments directly—it seemed that the gist of the argument for the Minister of Finance is that we ought not to be locked in the past. I agree and Mr Conway agrees. We are not here to say that we should just continue to do things because it's the way it has always been done. Chesterton says that one of our ancestors' off-spring, tradition, is "the democracy of the dead."

People of goodwill around here, once we get elected and we get into our roles—and I say this as a rookie MPP. I know I do things differently now than I did a few years ago and things that appalled me three years ago apparently don't appal me any more. We get into our roles and we get caught up in the tradition, and we suddenly do things because it's the way they're always been done. Let's call it democratic hazing of each other in this House. We're not here to argue in this motion, in my respectful opinion, that we should just defend tradition, that we should do this simply because it has always been done, that we should do this because of the hallowed chamber and the engravings on the wall. We should do it because it is the way in which our democracy ought to function.

How have our budgets functioned in the past? Specifically, there has always been a convention and, I believe, a rule, depending on how you want to argue the rule, but certainly it has been the tradition of this House, that budgets are presented in the House. On the occasions in which a minister has had to make a response to a budgetary statement that has been leaked in some fashion, either the finance minister or another cabinet minister has explicitly mentioned that these rules are meant to ensure (a) that people not be able to profit from, in effect, insider information and (b) they continuously

say that the first public utterance of a budget must be in Parliament.

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Finance minister Michael Wilson said in Hansard on April 27, 1989, "There are two essential considerations underlying budget secrecy: the need to ensure that a person does not profit or otherwise gain advantage from advance knowledge of the budget, and the principle that the government's financial policy should be disclosed to the House of Commons before it is made known to others." It was almost quoted verbatim by BC finance minister Elizabeth Cull in 1995.

Why? Why is that? Why is it presented here first? One of the reasons is privilege. Parliamentary privilege protects the delivery of this statement and gives it a level of officialdom, it gives it a level of decorum and gives it a finality, such that we're not guessing what the budget's going to say. We're not reading a speech that is given to a particular association or in a particular venue. It's an official statement of the government's finances.

Everybody says that nobody listens to politicians, and Parliament is irrelevant and so forth. But people listen across the world. Investors make decisions based on financial statements made by a government, not an unofficial statement, not somebody yukking it up on a radio show, not someone engaging in a partisan speech, as we all do in different venues. But what's the official statement? We know that if we make it in this House, it's different than making it on a radio show because we can change laws here. It's one thing to yuk it up on a radio show, but it's another thing to introduce a bill to change something in this Legislature. The reason that people obey laws is because they think that they are official. If we in this House dilute the authority of Parliament, we dilute the authority of the government. When I listened to the Minister of Finance speak and I heard her say what she said in this House, and I contrasted that with the budget speech that was given at Magna, one of them had an air of authority; it's delivered by the chancellor on the front bench in this House. The other one was tainted.

Clearly, that budget speech was impugned at Magna. We know that. This experience, I believe, proves the rule, proves the problem with providing a budget outside of the House. Is a press conference more or less official than a ministerial statement? We are going to debate that to no end. I understand that. It's really going to be up to the executive council of the day as to whether or not a statement is made in here or outside of here. There are political considerations. I acknowledged to the Minister of Finance this week that his ministerial statement, I realize, could have been made outside the House, which would have given us no opportunity to respond in any official capacity.

If people don't think that what the government of Ontario does is official, we've got problems. We've got problems. The government of the day—they're the folks that collect the taxes and spend the people's money. The government are the folks that set the laws and the rules by which people conduct themselves in society. If the gov-



ernment cannot speak officially, if instead we're not looking to the chancellor here, but rather once we're in a boardroom, is the official statement of the finances for the province of Ontario going to be from the chancellor? Or might we take it from a so-called expert? This is the difference. Everybody pans the so-called experts when we disagree with the experts, but the experts get to be case commentators when it comes to judicial decisions, which set the law, and decisions of Parliament. If we take something out of Parliament, then how authoritative is it? It's a problem. It's a sliding scale when it deals with issues like ministerial statements, for example. But it's a pretty serious problem when it deals with the finances of this province, and it becomes even more serious when we do consider the history of responsible government.

A lot of people fought for responsible government. The Canadas have been ruled by governors in England. George Brown fought to get responsible government in Canada so ultimately governors would have to answer to Legislatures, and now the cabinet answers to Legislatures. But here comes the problem, and this speaks to Conway's point. If we have a quasi-presidential system thrust into a parliamentary system, do we not lose our democracy? Do we not end up with what has been called a friendly dictatorship or an honourable tyranny? Those are colourful statements, but the point is, all power seems to rest in the First Minister's office and to some extent in cabinet. It begs the question asked by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke: what's the role of MPPs today? It has changed over the years, obviously. It's an accident of history that the provinces have ended up with the most important responsibilities in Canada—legislatively, that is: health care, education, the environment, electricity. These are the things that are relevant to people's day-to-day lives far, far more than the responsibilities carried by the federal Parliament, notwithstanding the important responsibilities that are there in foreign affairs and so on.

In fact, the day-to-day job of MPPs doesn't necessarily reflect that, the way we conduct ourselves. We often consider ourselves very much local politicians, and proud of it. "All politics is local," we say, and we say it over and over again. We often, MPPs—all of us do, or are expected to by many of our constituents—fulfill some roles that might be, strictly speaking, the job of municipal councillors, and maybe it's because many of the people who sit in this House come from local government that in fact that tradition continues.

We have important legislative responsibilities here and incredibly important subject matters that we must cover. Are we doing that? Look, we're not. We know we're not, not when we have all decision-making power vested in the First Minister, provincially and federally, with no opportunity in a majority government for non-cabinet members to hold the government to account. So when Mr Conway said that he was a child of minority governments, I thought that this is a family to which I'd like to be adopted, because this is a system which is far worse than a congressional system—and the suggestion was

that one of the evils in this was a congressional system. It's a congressional system without any checks and balances. We don't have any other executive or Parliament checking the power that sits in that seat over there, the First Minister's seat—we don't.

In turn, what are MPPs doing? What has happened to our committee system? I've had many conversations with the member for Niagara Centre on this subject. I asked him, "When exactly did the committee system start falling apart?" It doesn't work any more. We know that. The public accounts committee does actually do some excellent work. I'm not saying that never is work done, but the committees hardly ever sit, and when they do, by and large they turn into the same kind of partisan debates that tend to dominate what happens in this House here too.

There is enormous talent over there in the government benches outside of the cabinet which is not being tapped into. I'd like to think that there also are some opportunities for MPPs to serve, to truly serve, in their legislative capacity—people who sit outside of the cabinet on the opposition benches as well. But the ability for members to engage in that kind of work? No. More often than not, regrettably, tragically, opposition is reduced to the role simply of criticizing the government—rat-packing, some might say—and rarely do we have an opportunity to in fact engage in our roles as MPPs in a fashion which we feel we are fulfilling this legislative duty and addressing these incredibly important subject matters.

Why are we here and where are we going? Well, in 2003 I say to you that the jobs in which we are fulfilling as members of provincial Parliament ought to reflect the incredibly important subject matters and the very large constituencies that we represent, but they do not. It requires reform, and it's reform that can only start in this House.

**1550**

What the government called innovation with their particular budget we in the official opposition called an abomination, and we are debating whether or not it is a *prima facie* contempt. But if in fact that was going to be the dramatic change to our supply process, the dramatic change to our system of responsible government, the dramatic change to our parliamentary system and the authority which it carries and the dramatic change to the parliamentary privileges that come with budget statements in this House, if this government was to do that, then it had to do it under the rules we had set and not outside of the House, not exercising these presidential powers, as has been said, particularly when there's no opportunity for a check, a balance, another House, another person who can say, "No, you can't do that." They just went and did it. So now, after the fact, we find ourselves debating this.

The contempt, as has been said, is to those privileges. The contempt is to the authority of the statement of the government of the day with respect to the finances of the province. The contempt, I say to you, is to the office itself and the function of MPPs. I believe there is much more that we can do and much more that we want to offer the people of Ontario in fulfilling our roles.

The all-or-nothing roll of the dice that comes with this honourable tyranny, that comes with majority parliamentary governments, without any checks and balances, has got to change. We all know more and more people are less and less interested in what goes on here. It is just so trite to say. You pick up a textbook or a commentary from 30 years ago and they're saying the same thing as we're saying right now.

But it gets worse. Are younger people really interested in getting involved in this business? No. They think they can somehow effect change through Web sites. I'll tell you what, you can't pass a law through a Web site. You can't change our system through a Web site. You can't effect the kind of change that Parliaments can effect through a Web site, through colourful commentary. You can't do it. It's here.

If we're going to delegate powers outside of this House in the fashion that I think the Minister of Finance was suggesting and if we're going to put power back in the hands of working people—I thought we were here to represent those people; that was our job. In any event, if that's what she's proposing, well, that's interesting. Let's see what those proposed changes are. But you can't do it outside of the law, outside of our traditions, outside of our conventions. You can't just, willy-nilly, choose to do so. "Why? We're the cabinet. We can do whatever we want." This was the insult to everybody. We feel that all the time. I know that members who have served in opposition who are now on the government benches have tasted that sting. That's one thing, but this was different. This was the budget. You don't mess around with a budget like this government messed around with this budget in 2003.

**Ms Churley:** I can't say that it's a real pleasure to be here speaking to this ruling by the Speaker today—contempt of the Legislature—because it's not a happy day for democracy in this province when we have such a ruling and we're spending time debating the issue here today.

I want to say to the government House leader, the government finance minister, any other ministers who speak or any backbenchers who stand and try to duck and weave and split hairs over whether the Speaker actually ruled that the government showed contempt or showed that there was a parliamentary privilege abused, let me say directly to the government members, you may choose to dismiss and vote against the Speaker's ruling, today or next week when the vote happens, but what is perhaps more important—and I would suggest you listen, because you're going to be called in an election soon—is that you have already been tried and convicted by the people of this province on the evidence that has been out there when it was first announced. By the overwhelming evidence, you have been tried and convicted by the most important court in this province: the people.

They know that you showed contempt for this Legislature, contempt for their elected representatives and, in turn, complete contempt for them, for the people of this province. They made their voices heard loud and clear. I believe that the government and the people—the

minions, I believe is how my House leader referred to them. I want to be a bit more respectful. The campaign—what should I call them?

**Mr Kormos:** High-priced consultants.

**Ms Churley:** High-priced consultants; that's better—who came up with this hare-brained idea to keep the government out of the House, to announce this budget so that—guess what?—the opposition will not be able to get on their feet and respond here, as we always do right away, to the media. I'm sure they came up with this idea and said, "Look, you can go out and sell it as though we're going to be more democratic. We're going to do something unusual. We are going to take the budget directly to the people of this province." Guess what? It didn't fly. There was an instant negative, hostile reaction to what the government announced it was going to do. But did they listen? No. They tried to justify it. In fact, in the early days, if I recall—somewhere I have the quote. I probably can't find it in this pile of news reports on this idea. But I'll paraphrase.

The Minister of Finance went out of her way in the early days—unlike now—trying to justify it, as though it's normal and that other governments had sort of done it before, by saying, "Look, when it happened in the past, it was different. Another government had to deliver the budget outside the Legislature because of a filibuster. They had no choice," and "The other budget wasn't really a budget," which is true. It's true it wasn't really a budget; it was a financial statement. But, "Hey, we're going to really do something different. We are going to deliver a real budget outside of the Legislature." The finance minister made a point of bragging about the fact that they were setting a precedent by delivering a real budget for the first time outside of this Legislature.

Now, over time, and certainly today what we're hearing is, "No, it's really all the same. It's the same as other governments have done in the past. It's no big deal. We still had a lock-up. We still tabled it here in the Legislature."

My House leader, Mr Peter Kormos, has kindly sifted through all of these media releases I have and has pointed out—I'm going to give you the direct quote from the Minister of Finance. It says:

"Members of the Eves cabinet were flaunting their break with tradition. The March 12 press release from the Minister of Finance stated that, 'The Eves government will change the way budgets are presented in Ontario,'" emphasis added here. "Janet Ecker, the Minister of Finance, underscored the point when she acknowledged that, while past finance ministers have gone outside the chamber to present budgets due to a parliamentary filibuster or leak, 'What is ... important is that this, the actual initial communication of this to the public will occur outside the Legislature. That has occurred in some circumstances before, not in this kind of circumstance...' ... Ernie Eves and his cabinet colleagues thus concede that no precedent exists anywhere in Ontario's history for a government choosing"—not forced by circumstances or a financial statement, but choosing—"to introduce its budget outside" the Legislature.



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I want to say to this government that I'm offended by that. I do want to say that the government, again I will say, was taken by surprise by the reaction of the media. Look at all of the media reports, page after page. I believe every single media outlet in this province opposed what the government had to say—the Post, I believe, the Sun, the TV studios, the Star. Newspapers that are usually with this government tried to warn the government. The Globe, on its editorial page, day after day had an editorial saying—I believe they ended it with something like, “Stop this madness.” I'm paraphrasing here. Day after day, the government was warned that they were heading in the wrong direction and that indeed this was contempt for the Parliament, the Legislature and the people of this province.

In fact, the NDP House leader pointed out in this Legislature, when he rose on behalf of the New Democratic caucus, that not only were parliamentary practices, which are designed to protect the rights of all members of this assembly—and the actions of this government in presenting the budget outside of this House threatens the very foundation of this parliamentary democracy; I know my House leader pointed that out.

What I would say is that it's not perfect. God knows we have seen this government alarmingly undermine democracy in this province in the way it was outlined by my House leader earlier. But this time you went too far, because not only did the public see the contempt you were showing and that you were undermining the very foundations of parliamentary democracy in this province, but you held this place up for ridicule. The media were laughing at us. They were saying things like, “Why a TV studio? Why not deliver the Ontario budget from Cancun, where it's warm? Or maybe one of Saddam Hussein's palaces, where there is also disregard for the concepts of democracy? ... Let's just crown Eves ‘King Ernie the First’—and burn the Magna Carta while we're at it.” That's just one quote.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** Yes, I'm angry about this; I'm still angry about this. I'm not going to get up and give a nice, polite little speech about how we all have to do a little better in terms of the decorum around this place—perhaps that's true. I would like to see it improved. But what we're talking about here is fundamental, and the people of this province saw it. They saw that something was wrong here.

I received letters from my constituents and from across the province. I'm going to read you one as an example. This is just an example of many.

“Premier Eves,

“Please reconsider your decision to present the budget outside of Queen's Park in a television studio. The people of Ontario very carefully chose our MPPs in the last election to represent our interests at Queen's Park. I expect the business of government to be presented to my elected representative, Marilyn Churley, and I expect you to answer her questions on my behalf. That is the way a representative democracy works. Your hand-selected

studio audience is not representative of the people of this province and I object to your attempt to silence the majority of the population. Government is not reality TV, Premier Eves, and I suggest you reconsider lest we vote you off the island.”

Well, I think that's going to happen anyway.

Then, of course, there was this astounding and interesting article in the National Post on March 17 by Michael Bliss, a staunch—

**Mr Kormos:** Professor Bliss.

**Ms Churley:** Yes, Professor Bliss, the well-respected historian, a long-time Progressive Conservative. I'm going to read you some excerpts from this article by Professor Bliss. He starts with:

“Has Ontario's Progressive Conservative government become completely clueless? I may be an unrepresentative sample of one, but it's been a long time since I've voted anything but PC in Ontario, and yet I don't think I'm going to vote that way in the coming provincial election. The Ernie Eves government seems to me to have morphed into a gaggle of unprincipled bumbler, who have become effectively indistinguishable from the provincial Liberals. Is there any compelling reason to give them a vote?”

After outlining some of the things that he is unimpressed with, actions by this government, he goes on to say, “The last straw, though, and to me the profoundly important one, is the contempt”—contempt—“for our political heritage and our elected institutions that the Eves government is demonstrating in proposing to deliver an Ontario budget”—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Who said this?

**Ms Churley:** This is Michael Bliss—“on March 27 in a television studio”—the House leader dismisses Michael Bliss now; he throws up his hands—“rather than in the presence of the Legislature at Queen's Park. It's hard to find words to express one's dismay at the nearly mindless disregard for the Legislature and for democratic processes underlying such a cheap public relations stunt. There is also at play a contempt for the people of Ontario—an assumption that they're mindless, manipulable couch potatoes—on the part of the PC strategists”—

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. If you want to have a conversation—I'll say it just once more—get up out of your seat, walk across, and talk. But I'll not have any talking back and forth this afternoon.

**Ms Churley:** “There is also at play a contempt for the people of Ontario—an assumption that they're mindless, manipulable couch potatoes—on the part of the PC strategists who foisted this idea on the government.

“This is like the contempt of Parliament and of Canadians that Louis St Laurent and C.D. Howe and company showed in the pipeline debate of 1956, an attitude for which their government paid an enormous price. Citizens are not fools. They do care deeply about their democratic institutions.”

Mr Speaker, I think Professor Bliss was speaking for most Ontarians when he wrote this article. We have seen,

over the last eight years, since Mike Harris won government in 1995, the slow, steady trickle of the loss of democracy in this province. It has been outlined by others earlier today, the House leader from the Liberal Party and the House leader from the NDP, some of those very specific actions taken by this government that have undermined democracy. People out there from all political stripes are aware of it.

One of the things that strikes me, out of the long list of things that have happened to destroy our democracy in this province by this slow trickle, was the government not listening to the majority of Torontonians when they decided to create the megacity.

**Mr Kormos:** I remember that.

**Ms Churley:** Remember that.

**Mr Kormos:** I remember that well.

**Ms Churley:** Remember then the filibuster. I sat at that table.

**Mr Kormos:** New Democrats again.

**Ms Churley:** New Democrats did that. We were able, within the existing rules, to create a situation where for nine days—nine days steady—I slept here in my office. I was on duty 24 hours a day, sitting at that table.

Why did opposition parties bring in filibusters when we still could? It was when the government was acting in an undemocratic fashion, to hear more from the people and to give the people more of an opportunity to convince their government that they should listen to them, because the majority of Torontonians, a huge majority—I remember in East York it was well over 85%, but within the city of Toronto overall, well over 70%; I forget the actual number—said, “No, we don’t want a megacity. This would not be good for us.” But the government didn’t listen.

Filibusters did not happen very often in this place, and when they did happen, I can assure you they happened for a darned good reason, as in the megacity that was forced on us here. What did the government do? They decided, “Well, no, we’re not going to have any more of those, so we’re going to change the rules to prevent that from happening.” In fact, in every instance where the opposition, both parties, found ways to try to stop draconian legislation that was undemocratic in this province, the government simply changed the rules. We now sit day and night. We have two days in one considered two sessional days. You can do two bills as long as you don’t do the same one. You can’t have question period in the evening, but it’s considered a sessional day. Committees hardly ever hold public hearings on the most important issues facing this province. I could go on and on.

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The people of this province have been feeling the loss of their say in this province for some time, and that is why the New Democratic Party in the upcoming election is saying to people, “Your vote is your say.” Our election campaign is all about public power, in fact.

**Mr Kormos:** It’s [publicpower.ca](http://publicpower.ca)

**Ms Churley:** It’s [publicpower.ca](http://publicpower.ca), if you want to check it out. It’s very relevant to this debate, isn’t it? Because it’s about public power.

**Mr Kormos:** Bang on.

**Ms Churley:** It’s bang on. What is public power about but for people to have their say? And in terms of this situation, where the government determined that they were going to deliver something as important as a budget outside of the Legislature, the people spoke, and they spoke again and again and again. The media spoke. And this government arrogantly decided to go ahead.

They had made their plans and couldn’t back down. I can imagine the discussion behind the scenes. “Oh my God, this is getting out of hand. Oh, but if we back down that’ll look like Ernie Eves has caved once again and flip-flopped. We can’t do that either.” But then, what really surprised me, because they couldn’t find a TV station—remember that, after all the controversy over this?—to actually air it for them. We were wondering, where are they going to announce the budget? I couldn’t believe it. Somebody came up to me and said, “Did you hear? They’re going to deliver the budget at Magna.” I said, “What? You’re kidding?” “Yeah. It’s going to be invited guests only.” I thought it was a joke. I really did. I thought someone was kidding me. Then it turned out to be true. So they bused the media up there. I don’t know if anybody here watched it on television. I watched part of it here on TV and one of the funniest moments for me, the most surreal, was Tony Clement, the Minister of Health—the ministers were all there, all decked out and looking good—

**Mr Kormos:** That’s when he was schilling those Ginsu knives, or was it the Chia Pets?

**Ms Churley:** No, no, they were sitting in their seats, and on TV they would show on the screen—you know those little infomercials? So they’re all sitting there and the minister’s delivering her speech, and then there’d be a little infomercial and you’d look up on this big screen—and this was shown on TV—and there on this big screen, bigger than life, a TV screen within a TV screen, we see Tony Clement, the Minister of Health, doing an infomercial on health.

**Mr Kormos:** Or was it an actor pretending to be Tony Clement?

**Ms Churley:** That’s what I thought it might have been: an actor pretending to be him. But in fact the cameras then flashed to the minister sitting in his seat at Magna. So he was watching himself in the infomercial in the same room, and for a second, when everybody else was clapping, he looked like he didn’t know what to do. It was a very funny moment. “Should I clap for myself or not?” That’s how ridiculous this whole thing was.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, this government will probably vote against the Speaker, although he was right, but the people out there have already voted. They’ve convicted this government of contempt for them and this Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate? The Chair recognizes—



**Mr Kormos:** Go get 'em, Attorney General.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I can't recognize you if you're not in your chair.

**Mr Kormos:** I don't want to be recognized.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** Thank you, Mr Speaker—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Excuse me. When you stand up and talk, then I think that you want the floor. I don't want to argue. I'm just saying that is usually the custom that is done in this House.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon Mr Young:** I'm certainly quite prepared to enter this debate, this discussion. I'm pleased to offer some comments about what is clearly a debate that has caused many to become quite passionate. I do want to at the outset, with your permission, sir, talk about what it is that we are discussing today and talk about what it is we're not discussing today.

I think it's important to remember that the Speaker of this Legislative Assembly made a number of different findings this afternoon. First, and very significantly, he found that there was no case established of privilege being offended in this Legislative Assembly. He found rather clearly that no one's privilege was offended.

Secondly, he found that any discussion of constitutional law was best left for the courts and thus we should not be, and I can assure you that I will not be, discussing the suggestions, allegations, assertions made by the opposition relating to privilege or some constitutional offence that might have occurred. He offered no opinion that would suggest this government did anything wrong in regard to either.

As we talk about what he did and didn't do, let's also remember that he very clearly did not find this government in contempt. What he said was that based upon the arguments that were made to him last week, there was a *prima facie* case, and he allowed Mr Conway to present a motion to the House for discussion, for debate and ultimately to be voted on.

That's what we're doing. There has been no finding that there was any constitutional convention or law that was broken or offended. There has been no finding that there was any privilege of any member of this Assembly that has been offended, and there has been no finding that any member of this Legislature or the government was in contempt. What we're here to do is to talk about whether or not the latter indeed occurred, whether there was contempt.

In the discussion, a number of members have referred to the opinion that was rendered by Mr Finkelstein. Mr Finkelstein is a very well respected, renowned lawyer, who is paid by the hour as are most lawyers, as was I at one time, and Mr Finkelstein offered an opinion to a client. His opinion is one legal opinion that has been rendered with reference to the matters we're discussing

today, but as we debate this issue, and ultimately as the 103 members of this esteemed body make their decision, one should recall that it is only one opinion from a single lawyer. There were other opinions. I've read four to date, all authored by well-respected, esteemed counsel, individuals who have established a reputation, quite frankly, that I doubt any member of this Legislative Assembly would even begin to attack or criticize or comment upon except in the most flattering way. There were at least four lawyers who prepared lengthy opinions that said the actions of the government were not contemptuous, did not offend any convention or the constitution in any way, shape or form.

Now I grant you that simply because a lawyer renders an opinion that says X or Y doesn't make it so. In fact, our courts are filled with cases where there are conflicting opinions. Really, what is of import is what the 103 members of this Legislative Assembly ultimately decide when this debate ends and when we have the opportunity to vote. That's what matters, and I only reference the legal opinion of Mr Finkelstein to put it too in perspective, to say that it is but one further opinion from someone who was paid to render an opinion. It should be viewed as such.

What we should do, with respect, Mr Speaker, is look at what actually occurred. We should look at the facts surrounding the budget of 2003. We should look at what occurred in this assembly over the last couple of weeks in relation to the budget, and we should look at what was done when the budget was first put to the public in March of this year.

I submit to you that the government was not attempting to abridge, to limit, to restrict in any way, shape or form discussion about the budgetary proposals. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. What they were trying to do was expand the process, not to diminish it in any way.

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So, Mr Speaker, what occurred was an opportunity for a number of different individuals and groups to make submissions to the Minister of Finance about what should have been in the budget. Ultimately, the budget papers were tabled with this assembly, with the clerks, just as they have been done, quite frankly, in Commonwealth countries for hundreds of years. They were tabled, Mr Speaker, on the same day that they would have been, regardless of whether or not a slightly different procedure had been followed. I point out to you, sir, that the recognized budget lock-up procedure was followed. I will have further comments about that lock-up procedure and its history in a few moments.

This government has undertaken to table the budget motion in due course and to introduce budget bills. There will be question periods, and the contents of the question periods will undoubtedly deal with the subject matter of the budget. Questions will be asked. The finance minister will be here, the Premier will be here to answer those questions, as has always been the case.

There will be debates upon the budget bills that are ultimately introduced and, most importantly, there will be

votes. As with any law, as has always been the case, there will be three votes on each budget bill that is presented. Unless and until a majority of members of this Legislative Assembly vote in favour, the contents of those bills will not be the law of this province.

Sir, I say to you that I believe it is a great privilege to serve in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I mean that sincerely. I believe that, quite frankly, every one of us, all 103 members of this Legislative Assembly, feels the same way. I believe that the vast majority of us—maybe not each member but certainly almost every member of this assembly—is here for the right reasons, regardless of whether they're New Democrats or Liberals or Conservatives. They're here because they want to leave this province a better place than they found it. I believe that, sir, we have different approaches as to how we are going to accomplish that or hope to accomplish that, but what motivates us to be here is a respect for our constituents and a respect for this assembly and for this process.

But Mr Speaker, I'd ask you to take note of this, if you take note of any part of my submissions today: Legislatures are not monuments. Sir, they're not museums of archaic practices. They must remain living bodies relevant to everyday people. I understand that. I think most members of this Legislative Assembly understand that.

I think to completely understand the discussion we're having today and where the budget of this calendar year fits in, one must look at history. One must look at the fact that there was a time when the Premier or Prime Minister in a Legislature did not attend to answer questions, ever, on a regular basis, and that evolved over time.

There are many viewers who are watching us at home, across this great province, because the conventions surrounding this assembly changed, because we allowed one, two, three, four, five cameras to be put into this Legislative Assembly, even though that had never been done before, even though many argued that that was contemptuous to this institution. But what happened was that there was an understanding that it was time to move on, that we could do a better job by changing somewhat, not by abandoning, but by expanding the practices and the procedures of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I'd also ask you to consider, when you ultimately consider the comments overall, and I'd say to the members present who will ultimately vote on this motion, I'd ask you to all consider that there are numerous examples that one might argue departed from past precedents and practices.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about what occurred in 1988. Certainly that has been the subject of comments from many members today and indeed last week, and I believe that you, Speaker, actually referenced it on a number of occasions in your decision today. But I do want to at least touch upon the fact that in 1988, in this province, a budget was read from outside of this assembly and that was not ruled to be a contemptuous act. In 1989, the then federal Minister of Finance had to announce his budget outside of Parliament.

More recently, and one might argue more disturbingly, from the end of 2002 until the release of his budget in

February 2003, the federal Minister of Finance, John Manley, had announced so many of his budget proposals outside of Parliament that the actual speech that was given in the federal Parliament was greeted with almost no surprise.

Indeed, we must acknowledge, accept and embrace the fact that change is part of our Westminster-style parliamentary tradition. Countries across the Commonwealth have been adapting, particularly when it comes to the way in which the budget is introduced and debated.

I would ask you, sir, as I would ask the other members of this great body, to look at what has gone on in England over the last number of years. The United Kingdom has made many changes in the way that the budget is discussed, debated and introduced. I'd ask you also to look at what has occurred in New Zealand and in Australia, where very different formats are now utilized in relation to the budget. I would say to the members opposite that they will see those that jurisdictions are evolving, just as this jurisdiction is evolving, and there is no reason to label the activities that occurred in this province as being contemptuous.

I was very interested in the member opposite from Windsor-St Clair, Mr Duncan, talking rather candidly at one point in his submissions today about his federal brethren. I hope I am quoting him correctly when he suggested that they too were guilty in his eyes of moving from what had been the tradition of first introducing budget initiatives only in the chamber. I say to you, Mr Speaker, that in fact if you examine what has occurred in the federal Parliament, particularly in the last number of years with Mr Chrétien, Mr Manley, and Mr Martin, what we have seen is the phrase "trial balloon" popularized and defined as part of our society. Indeed, in Ottawa budget time has become a cynical season of focus groups, media speculation and changing positions.

That's not the approach that we took. Minister of Finance Ecker and the Premier took a very different approach. Their intent, and in fact the reality, is that they presented their budget, the people's budget, to the people. It's a budget that takes this province forward. It's a budget that will support growth and job creation, and it's a budget that cares for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. It can do that because we now have economic growth and increased financial resources. All of the good intentions in the world that the NDP and the Liberals have, and I referenced earlier their reason for being here, all of those good intentions amount to absolutely nothing if you don't have the financial wherewithal to actually help those that you should be helping.

This government has helped to rebuild this province, and this budget, the budget that I look forward to debating—not the procedure, not the format, not the style, not the political mudslinging, but the contents of the budget—will continue to support growth and will continue to support job creation and will allow us with those additional resources, with that additional economic growth, to support some of the most vulnerable people in



our province. That's what government is supposed to be doing.

1630

Let's take a look at that budget, one I hope we will very soon have an opportunity to debate the merits of. It was the fifth consecutive budget that was balanced in this province. That hasn't happened in Ontario since 1908. It was a budget that contained tax relief for seniors in a form never before provided. It contained relief for some of the most vulnerable citizens in our society. It contained continued tax cuts for individuals and for small businesses. It contained what was indeed, and continues to be in my respectful opinion, a recipe for increased growth in this province, the same sort of growth that in the past has helped men and women, and small, medium and large businesses create 1.1 million net new jobs since 1995.

The budget tabled by the Ernie Eves government also included approximately \$2 billion of increased funding for health care. It is essential that we do that. It is essential that we keep spending more money on health care because that is the number one priority of Ontarians and that is the number one priority of Canadians. It's particularly difficult, particularly challenging for provincial governments across this country, whether it be a Liberal government in the Maritimes, a New Democratic government in Manitoba or Saskatchewan, a Liberal government in BC or this Conservative government. It is particularly challenging to satisfy the health care needs of Canadians by reason of the fact that the federal Liberal Party has abandoned Canadians for all intents and purposes.

The federal government used to pay 50 cents of every health care dollar. Most years now they are down to somewhere between 13 cents and 14 cents. This year, with much hoopla, they've managed to get up to almost 17 cents and that number is shrinking. The remainder, the difference between what was the federal share of 50% and what is their share of somewhere in the teens, has to be made up by provincial governments. Each and every provincial government is doing their best to do that.

I say to you that I would prefer today to be debating those issues and only those issues. I would prefer to be talking about a budget that responds to the concerns I hear at doorsteps across Willowdale each and every week when I canvass across the riding. I know they want tax relief. I know they want better health care. I know they want more in education. They know this government is doing its utmost to provide that to them.

I say to you that the budget that was brought forward by Minister Ecker and by Premier Eves does all of that and, as I indicated earlier, also supports our senior citizens with a very significant and substantial tax cut on their residential property taxes. As many of my constituents know, if this budget passes, seniors across Willowdale, seniors across Ontario, will no longer have to pay the education portion of their property tax, which they paid in most instances for decades. For individuals on a fixed income, and that is true of most of the seniors

in my riding, this is a tremendous relief. They want it passed. They want to get on with it. They want to know where the Liberals stand on it. They want to know where the New Democrats stand on it. They know the Conservatives support tax relief for them.

But until this procedural debate that has been initiated by the opposition party is completed, we won't have an opportunity to debate these issues and to help those individuals who need help, who want help and who this government has undertaken to help.

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** By the way, if the government was really interested in passing legislation, we had four and half months that we haven't been sitting, but that's just an aside.

It's a privilege to stand in my place today to support the motion from the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I don't have the 28 years of experience that the honourable member has, and I've certainly listened to eloquent speakers on all sides of the House, but at the same time I think this is a substantive issue. It's something that goes to the heart of who we are and why we're here as members of this Legislature.

I have a great deal of respect for this institution and I would hope our actions would also be reflective of that respect that we have for this institution. It's the place where each and every one of us as members of the Legislature has been elected by the people. We are the people's representatives. We bring to the Legislature and to the government the concerns of our constituents. Each and every one of us does that. That's why we're here.

When I hear over and over again that the budget speech at Magna was a way to hear the concerns of the people, what are we here for, then? Why do I, as a member who's been elected in a constituency of 100,000 people, come to this place if my public voice is not considered a reflection of the people I represent? We all, each and every one of us, have earned that privilege through a democratic election process as members of provincial Parliament.

There's a basic principle for me that underlines our parliamentary democracy, and it goes back hundreds of years. It's not about archaic protocol, if you want to call it that. For me, it's very simple: the spending of the people's money must be presented to the representatives of the people. That's been understood for hundreds and hundreds of years, and that's the basic foundation of our democracy. That's what I understand it to be.

The other fact that's important to me is that each and every one of us takes our seat with the weight of that responsibility to our constituents. I am deeply offended as a member of this Legislature when I hear the Minister of Finance and I hear the justification for holding the budget speech outside this House, saying that it is going to be closer to the people, that more people will hear it, that it will be more democratic. I ask, how has it been the case that more people can hear it—I believe the word was that more people will be able to listen to it. Is there an assumption in this House, by the cabinet and ministers and the Premier in this place, that here in the Legislature

we don't speak directly to the people? I believe we have what we call a parliamentary channel here. We stand up in our place. Everything I say is written in Hansard. The budget speech and all of the little vignettes that went along with it, do we have that in Hansard? I believe we don't have that record. We don't have an official record of that.

I've had the privilege of being a part of this place, and I've earned it by being elected in my riding. I came here with an understanding of who I am as a member of this Legislature. I've had the privilege as well to be on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. The reason that I have done this and that I enjoy this committee—we had the chance to go, and the member from Windsor-St Clair mentioned that we went, to Westminster. We went to and were able to look at the devolved Parliaments in Scotland and Wales. We went to Ottawa. We went also to the assembly in Quebec. Why? So we could better understand the various themes, if you want to call it that, to our parliamentary system, the variations on a theme.

1640

Parliamentary democracy is about a distinction, a distinction about partisanship and what the role of Parliament is, which is higher than that. Each and every person in this place has the privilege to speak for their constituents. The member, Mr Conway, mentioned this notion of free votes. Each one of us can speak our mind in this place. Unfortunately, what I've seen too often since I've been here is almost, if you want to call it that, a cult-like approach in that everyone has to vote the same way because otherwise there's going to be strong party discipline. I hear the same words. I hear the same message. Messaging is very important. Where are the independent thinkers in this House? I cannot believe every single member on the Conservative side can have that much contempt for this place that they would actually hold and agree with what happened. I can't believe we don't have at least 20 members on the other side who disagree with how this budget was presented.

One of the things about our democracy is that we must have the courage to defend it and not all be part of this wave of, "We all have to think alike. We have to all speak the same language." We're here representing what I call the various—a House of Commons. Why? We bring to the table various perspectives and various ideas. I end up getting quite emotional about this because it's so important to me.

I have listened to the excuses. I've listened to the Minister of Finance. Most of her speech and presentation had to do with talking about the content of the budget, and not about the issue, because I don't think she can justify it. We will wait and see when the vote takes place how many members will have the courage to really vote what they believe, and not what's being told by the front benches or what's being told around the Premier's office. This is fundamental to who we are in this place.

I want to talk to the issue that I've been told, and I listened to the Minister of Municipal Affairs say, "We

have these opinions, but these opinions don't count for anything."

I want to quote from some experts. There's a distinguished long-time Speaker of the British House of Commons. He said about the fact the budget was read outside of Parliament, "It is the questioning of the statement that is so central to our democracy. The elected representatives of the people get the right to question."

I read Professor Bliss's comments. He said this manoeuvre is "contempt for our political heritage and our elected institutions," and is "nearly mindless disregard for the Legislature." He goes on to say that it is "a contempt for the people of Ontario." It is a contempt because I could not come to this place and sit in my rightful place that I have earned as a democratically elected representative and listen to the budget.

I got an invitation, by the way, like many other members did, two days before the budget, to attend with the other elected representatives, and I found that terribly offensive. I actually wrote to the minister and explained to her why I would not be able to attend the budget presentation. I sent my regrets. What I said to her was that I, as an MPP, was astounded that she did not view the Legislature as a place that represents the interests of the people of Ontario. Considering the fact that all 103 MPPs, all democratically elected representatives from all parties, come together here to debate and hold the government to account, come here to make laws and scrutinize the executive council on their decision-making, what exactly do they believe the role of the Legislature is?

A cabinet minister came into my office—and because I have some respect, I won't mention his name right now. He came into my riding to give out \$7,000 to the YMCA. What they do, of course, is use their ministerial position as a way to prop up the candidates in the riding, which, by the way, I believe is offensive because the candidates have not yet earned the position of MPP, yet they treat them as if they are the MPP, disregarding the duly elected representative in the area, which is not only discourteous, but I think it's unethical. That's my view on that. But I did attend the function and I talked to the minister for a while. I said, "Well, we'll see you on the 30th when the throne speech is on," and he said, "Oh, I just can't stand going to that place. It's so irrelevant. We should just shut it down and keep it down the whole year." I looked at him and I said, "You must be kidding." I was totally astounded that for some reason there are Conservative members who actually believe that. They believe this place is irrelevant.

**Interjection:** Oh, come on.

**Ms Di Cocco:** That's exactly what I was told.

That goes to the heart of why I'm standing here, suggesting that I believe most of the honourable members on the Conservative side do not agree with that comment. I would like to think that, but we'll see that when the vote takes place. Because if they vote against the motion, it will truly show that they believe this place is irrelevant and they want to reduce this place—



*Interjection.*

**Ms Di Cocco:** Absolutely. The environment minister there says that this is ridiculous, I think.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Di Cocco:** Well, something to that effect. I'm paraphrasing.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I said you're wonderful.

**Ms Di Cocco:** Oh, I see.

As I continue the last section of my comments here, I believe the whole argument that the budget speech was done as a way to expand the democratic process—that's what I believe I heard. I can't believe that it actually happened. I can't believe that I'm listening to ministers of the crown in this place justifying the fact that the budget speech was held outside the Legislature.

When we talk about consultation, I heard various ministers talk about the consultation. We had a community health centre project that was denied about two months ago—and we talk about health care; 11,000 signatures—and there was support from Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, all levels of government. But that consultation obviously went out the window because we received a denial for that.

1650

We have been restructuring a hospital for eight years. We followed all the rules. We have a tremendous doctor shortage in our area. This amalgamated hospital now is an inadequate facility. We're losing experienced health care professionals there because the conditions in which they work are so archaic, and yet the ministers don't listen. They don't listen because it isn't the message they want. They don't want to hear that we need a new hospital and that we've got a huge problem with regard to access to medical care, and yet it's irrelevant to them because it isn't coming—or obviously they have different priorities, priorities that are based only on what they want to hear, not on the reality that exists out there for everyone.

The whole notion that a parliamentary government in a parliamentary institution such as Ontario—a civilized and, I would like to think, forward-thinking institution—would hold a budget speech as a photo op, as an informational, is the most offensive act that anyone who is here to represent the people's interests would take. I say that the people of Ontario will ask the question, why? Why was there such contempt and disdain for a place where we elected you to go to work on our behalf? Why would anyone make that decision? The excuses or the justifications that I've heard hold no water. The whole notion that this is about progress, that it's a better way to do things—you must think that the public is absolutely brain-dead. You must have a sense, or you're so disconnected and you're so out of touch with ordinary people that you believed that you could get away with it without anybody noticing.

"Oh, this isn't important to the people of Ontario. This isn't important to anyone." That was the justification I believe I heard from the Premier.

I believe that there will be a big price to pay. There will be a huge price because the public cares about our

institutions, and I believe the public cares about us enhancing our democratic process, not tearing it down, not eroding it. Do you know what power does sometimes—and I believe it does? It blinds. It totally blinds and we forget, or I should say the people who are blinded by power forget, why they're there. And the partisanship becomes so narrow-minded that they forget that here in Parliament we have an opportunity to think for ourselves, to protect what we believe is important and not to follow like sheep because someone has this novel idea to take the budget to Magna and have the informational.

I think it's a disgrace that it happened. Don't tell me that you care about democracy and you respect this place when your actions are totally opposite to those words. Enhancing democracy is about protecting and making sure that we understand why we have those conventions and those traditions and not disregarding them mindlessly, as you have done with the budget presentation at Magna.

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** Members of the House are well aware of my commitment over the last eight years to the democratization of the functioning of this House. My interest in that issue has not been because of a fascination with process, but because of my conviction that as we involve more MPPs in the process, we will involve more Ontarians in the process, and as we get more input, we'll have a better debate about the merits or lack of merits about a particular proposal, and the decisions made in the House will indeed be better decisions.

I'd like to briefly outline for the House the various proposals that I have put before this Legislature to try and make this institution function more democratically. The reason I do this is that I'd like to share with the House the principles which underlie the proposals I've made, because these principles are going to be those on which I base what I'm going to do about this motion and some suggestions I'm going to make as to what might be done about the ruling that the Speaker has given earlier today.

The proposal I'd like to refer to first is my Democracy in Ontario Day bill. That proposes to designate September 17 in each year as Democracy in Ontario Day. September 17, 1792, was the first day an elected Legislature ever met to conduct the business of this province. Prior to that, both the British and the French had always governed Ontario without any elected representatives. That was a truly fateful day in the history of this province. Ever since, the elected representatives of the people have met regularly to do the people's business. This bill is, of course, symbolic, but I think that as we look at making this institution function more democratically, we cannot ignore symbolism. Symbolism is important. Body language, to use the more current phrase, is important. I think that as we look at how we should do business, we should consider symbolism. The flags in this place do mean something. The mace, the symbol of the authority of the House and the people, does mean something. So as

we consider, as we should do, the questions raised by the ruling of the Speaker earlier today, I don't think we should ignore the symbolism of what we do, because it does convey to the people what we consider important, what we consider to be significant in doing their business.

Members will also be aware of some of the changes in the standing orders of this House that I have proposed. One of them, which is on the order paper again now and I believe has endorsement from the Premier to do it in some form, would remove the absolute right of veto that the cabinet has over final approval of legislation in this House. Obviously, if we are going to do something like that, there have to be safeguards, and I think the proposal builds some safeguards in. Maybe there are better safeguards that members will propose before we see the proposal put into its final form and actually enacted. The proposal was endorsed as well by the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly when it did its report some months ago.

It is, I think, important that the members of this Legislature, without the approval of the executive council, can in fact legislate if a sufficient number want to do so. That's not to say there shouldn't be safeguards. I certainly agree there should be, and they are incorporated, but I think the principle of the elected representatives as a whole having the right to do that is very, very important.

We also have before us in the legislative committee's report a proposal to double the time for second readings of private members' public business. That, I would respectfully suggest to you, is also quite important. The more opportunity there is for ideas to come forward from all 103 MPPs, which really means from all 12 million Ontarians, the more opportunity we'll have to recognize good ideas, get debate going and get action taken on behalf of the people.

1700

It's no secret that I hope, as we move down this path of greater democratization, we can look for some more formal mechanisms than we have now to allocate more time for third readings of private members' public business.

I was very proud as a member of this House to note that in the last session of this Legislature some 20% of the public bills were sponsored by private members and not by the government. That certainly is a vast improvement over what we saw a generation ago. Not only is it an improvement in the sense that we have more involvement, it's an improvement in the quality of laws that we're passing. What we have to do now in that regard is look for ways of formalizing this.

I'd also note that as we involve the MPPs more, I think we'll find the cabinet itself more interested in staying ahead of the curve. They may feel more interested in coming forward with good legislation when they realize someone else may if they don't. More people being involved will also motivate more the people who are involved.

Members are also aware of my proposal that this Legislature confirm judges and justices of the peace

before they can take office. It's rather interesting that our current law says they cannot be removed from office without the Legislature concurring, yet they are the only appointments now, basically, other than short-term appointments, for which there is no legislative review.

You will be well aware that our government agencies committee reviews all the longer-term appointments that are made, with the exception of the judges and the justices of the peace, yet these appointments are permanent appointments, they perform a very important function, as we all know, and at the moment it's sort of a backroom-type operation. That's not to criticize the work of the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee, which does public criteria, and I know they work very hard. But the fact of the matter is that it should be up to the elected representatives of the people as a whole to set the criteria for appointment and to hold the government accountable in every case for the meeting of those criteria.

I might say, and I don't want to get too far into detail on this point today, I think there are ways and means, as we work together, of making a process like this work quite efficiently. The suggestion that it's going to delay the functioning of the House and it's going to get us involved in a lot of debate that doesn't mean anything is quite wrong. If we prepare the rules properly and have a sincere commitment on the part of all to making the rules work well, I think they will work well.

I would like, at the risk of congratulating myself and a few of my colleagues, to suggest to you that we can look at the model of the government agencies committee. I've been on that for six of the last eight years, and I think it functions quite well. We get to the point, we ask the questions we want to ask and we then deal with the merits of the appointment. It is a real process, it establishes criteria and it gives all caucuses the opportunity for input. What has really happened at that committee, I suggest to you, is that the committee informally has set criteria for appointment. When they do that, the appointments that are submitted to the committee are going to meet those criteria by and large. People can understand who the MPPs are. They understand that they're elected. They understand how to get accountability from the MPPs. When we take something out of this forum and put it into some other kind of mechanism, we do get into quite significant problems. People don't understand who's doing it, they do not understand how to make them accountable and it just doesn't work as well. I know that that particular proposal is controversial. I think it's a good one. I think it will work. I think our experience on the government agencies committee shows it will work. I am hopeful that I'll be able to convince the majority of members of the House, under the new rules which are going to give private members' public business more opportunities for debate and for passage, that it is indeed a good law. I hope to see that bill in due course becoming the law of this province.

There's another bill that I have before this House which involves giving the Legislature itself the same



right to call inquiries as the cabinet now has. Probably, if we were to ask the general public, "Is that the case now?" they would say, "Yes, it is. After all, you're the people who are elected; surely you have the same right to call inquiries by majority vote as the cabinet does now." The actual fact of the matter is: we do not. That is not to say that there shouldn't be some controls on that as well. You can have a situation where a process doesn't work well because it hasn't been well thought out.

I'm not saying, by the way, lest I be misinterpreted, that any of these proposals don't require further work. I believe in the process; that's why I put them forward. A number of my bills and other bills I've put forward I've changed as I received input from other members and members of the general public, but I do think that if we can get the facts before the elected representatives of the people and we can give them, in an effective way, participation in the process, we are going to see results that will be materially better than the results we have now. That, in essence, is the legislation I have proposed. Those are the principles on which I based these proposals. Those are the principles on which I'm going to make suggestions as to how the House might respond to the ruling made by the Speaker earlier today.

We do tend to hear the comment, "Well, the public doesn't really care too much about process." That's certainly true of the details. They don't see it as something they need to do, to get involved in the details of how we run the House, but I do think they understand where we engage in democratic process and where we engage in processes that are not as democratic as they could be. At least in London West, I am quite confident that they understand the importance of good, solid, democratic process. So I think when one is tempted to despair and say, "No one cares about these issues," one may be misreading the views of the general public. The public actually is quite astute, in my experience. I think they really do get it and they understand that these debates about democracy are not just hot air. I think they understand the importance of the issues that we're discussing today.

As many members will know, I have publicly acknowledged the credibility and legitimacy of the concerns that have been expressed over the process used to present the budget. I think Mr Speaker Carr was quite right in offering public comment on those concerns some time ago.

The issue, of course, before us now is: what is the right thing to do to respond to the finding that Mr Speaker Carr has made earlier today? I think, as we contemplate the answer to that, it is important to look at it in the context of greater democratization and greater input generally. I think it's a mistake to regard this issue as being a one-off: "Well, there's a ruling. We have to respond to it and we have to get on with it." I think it's much better to look at it as an ongoing process. Are we moving to more democratization? Are we not changing? Are we moving to less? I will not repeat for the House, because the House is already well aware of it, my view on the direction in which we should be moving and why.

1710

I think in looking at how we should respond, we have to consider that it is important, now that the problem has been formally identified by the processes of this House, to consider ways in which we can get public input. I'm going to declare a personal view only, and it's this: I would hope we might consider sending the ruling and the issues that arise from that ruling to a committee of this Legislature, because I think it's important that we get comment, pro and con, ideas of all kinds, from the general public before we formulate any formal response to the ruling that has been made earlier today. Once we get that input, it's important that a group of MPPs designated by this House—in other words, a committee—work on these, sort them out, and decide which ones seem to be worthy of further pursuit and which ones maybe are not going to advance the cause any.

Once that work is done, I would be hopeful that that would come back to the House and be reflected in actions taken by the House. Some of them might be changes to the standing orders. Some of them might be statutory changes. Some of them might be declarations of the House as to what the House believes proper practice and procedure is.

So I think the motion made by the member from Renfrew today is premature. I don't think that today is the right day or this week is the right time or this month is the right time to deal with this. I think as my friend from Renfrew reflects on this, he may begin to see the importance of following some of the democratic principles at least underlying my view on this in formulating the response of the House. I don't doubt that he gave careful consideration to the motion he put forward, and I don't doubt his experience is most valuable in assisting us in determining what should be done, but I would suggest that to the extent that the democratic principles and practices I've talked about earlier are valid, in responding to this, it is important that we follow those practices and honour those principles. So I would like to suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that supporting this motion is in fact premature. That's not to say that at the end of good democratic process we might not well find such a motion by the House to be in order, but I do suggest to you that it's important that we get input from everybody, analyze it, have it discussed here in a public fashion and then take action.

I see this issue as some portion of a much larger issue of good democratic process which I think will lead to good government and better government. But I would suggest to the House that to respond too quickly to the ruling today might well be something where one year or five years down the line, we may say, "I don't think they took enough time to get input. I think there are things they could have done and didn't do." We may say, "That was not the best response. Had they taken more time, they would have had a better response."

I would invite the House to consider my suggestions. Maybe there's a better way of doing it, although I would stand very firmly on the proposition that we have to get

input from all Ontarians who want to offer input. We have to have that analyzed by at least a group of elected MPPs, and then we have to look at what are the effective ways of achieving further democratization.

The government said they were trying to involve more people, and to the extent they tried to do that, this was certainly a good initiative. Did they do it well? I think that's something that we should get input from everyone on, deal with that input and take whatever action is needed.

I would invite the members of the House to consider this as one part of a bigger issue and to follow good democratic principles in coming up with solutions so that five years from now, when people look back on what we did today, they are going to say, "They responded in a careful, measured way, getting input from all, analyzing it properly and coming up with good solutions." Democracy and transparency do work and we have an opportunity to make them work better in this place if we seize it.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** I want to paraphrase one of the previous speakers this afternoon. It is a pleasure to rise in this debate. I have been waiting for this debate since the day I heard about the effrontery of taking the budget out of this place. It goes to some very fundamental questions that have been posited here by the member from Renfrew and by others before me, but that bear reminding for each one of us because they go to the heart of why we have this privilege, of why I get to stand up in this place at all. Why is this room at all special? Why do the people who come here have any rights on behalf of the rest of the people of Ontario? Why do we have people who arrive in pointed hats and a Speaker sitting in a chair? Because there is something in this room that is bigger than our individual concerns, the political parties that employ us, the petty agendas we sometimes can fall prey to. That's this place.

There is a mace on the table, as I tell the Grade 5s, because they always ask when they come to visit, "What's the mace doing there?" They surmise that someone's going to get hit over the head with it. The mace is a symbol of the power of everybody else. We're not here because we're powerful people. We're here as representatives of other people. We need to be usefully constrained. We need to have the impact of this particular place upon our personal agendas. And we, each of us, understood that in the humility of being elected. We understood it when we swore allegiance to a sovereign, to the Queen, and we understood that was symbolic too, that we swore allegiance to the people of this country, to the people of this province, to an institution that is not dry as toast, that is not to be swung around like some obstacle in an obstacle course, but instead is the fundamental place where we indicate respect for the people of this province.

Around the question of debate there can be no greater issue of respect. Government has suffered mightily over the last number of the years. The government party has trafficked endlessly on that fact and on the fundamentals

of the feeling people have that the money they give up and surrender on their paycheques, when they buy gasoline, when they purchase other things, goes someplace that isn't accountable. They don't connect it to the needs they have in their lives. The budget exactly and precisely is supposed to be us asking permission, asking the 105,000 people who sent me here, even the ones who didn't vote for me, the ones I work for, "Is it all right to take money out of your pockets, to put it to work in the public interest? Is that okay?"

The minute we take that lightly, this idea that government somehow just has to finesse it, just has to win the overnight poll, just has to have the public relations team, when it's not about something substantive, then we have disrespected that fundamental act on the part of government and we are on a slippery slope further away from any agreement, any kind of understanding on the part of the public that that act, and it is an act, of taking their dollars and putting it to work has some real meaning back in their lives and is based on respect for them.

I have been waiting for this debate. I have been looking forward to this possibility that we would be able to remedy, in some way, the affront that we sent to the people of Ontario. I offer to all the members opposite the open possibility that that wasn't intended. It is, however, what was effected.

I ask the members opposite, first of all, to stand in their place. This is not a debate not to be heard on. We are all in some reasonable period of time—I understand from the speech from the member of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke that some 96 of the 103 will be auditioning again for these jobs. I think people have every right, not just based on this episode, to ask, "Why do you want to come here if you're not going to show that respect?"

**1720**

I believe very strongly that what the member has put forward, the motion that he has supported in his name, is the minimum that we should be extending. This is something we can do. It is something that we need to be doing, not because it is the beginning and the end of the debate, but because it is the kind of step that we are required to make.

There are certain decisions that we are asked to do as parliamentarians that have very little to do with our personal preferences; they have to do with our jobs. These jobs, if we're going to bring respect back to them, if we're not just going to bemoan how people look down on politicians, had better ask us to act outside of ourselves from time to time, and this place, this institution, needs our work and our attention right now.

To me, it's related to an attitude, an attitude that is not restricted to one side of the House. But I do want to address some of the arguments put forward. I would like to believe that maybe that's the initial reaction we're going to get from some of the members on the government side. I heard some temperate comments from the member from London, who just spoke, but there were other comments made.

We heard the House leader essentially talk about the Speaker's ruling as some kind of distortion. To resort to



that argument is not just denial; this was an act of commission, as I heard the Speaker say. He made a distinction. I think it's very, very important for us to debate and understand and appreciate that distinction. The government went out of its way, not by circumstance, not by exigency, but by commission.

We did not sit for 138 days. We didn't sit for an extra several weeks, by the decision of this government. They made that choice. They didn't put themselves in any way in proximity to respect for the people, as represented by Parliament. They decided to come up with a new avenue, a different way of doing it.

I listened very carefully to the member from Pickering-Ajax, the Minister of Finance, put forward that this was an honest effort to engage the public. Because she puts that in good faith, I have to ask the question, how is that a good-faith effort when it's only the people that you invite, when you only listen to the people you want to hear? When you say that's the nature of what you would turn our representative democracy into, you would reach only the people that you invite to be there, only the ones who happen to be willing to turn on your particular event.

That does go to the basics of why we are here. We are here because people out there, people who are watching us right now—there is an audience for what we do here. I suspect that audience, quite frankly, even at this time of the day, is bigger than the audience that tuned into the event at Magna. In fact, they deserve to hear from us about how we would respond and how we would remedy this, because there is an alternative. It is not about playing games.

When I heard the Minister of Finance say, "We were really trying to bring it to the people," there are so many things about this particular gesture that are anti the people. First of all, it is not fulfilling the number one obligation we have, which is to try to objectify some of what we do. There is partisan advantage to be taken and to be put forward and so forth about a variety of things, but if people are to have faith in government at all, whatever type we choose, there has to be some objective information available.

And I don't misconstrue—the budget isn't that. The budget isn't objective. It's a political document that finds its way into the House on behalf of the party that's in power. However, by reading that document in this House and subjecting it to the processes of this House, it becomes an objective document that the people of this province can rely upon.

I want to refer here very specifically to the role of the estimates committee. The member opposite from Kitchener has sat on that committee and has employed himself on that committee, I think in good faith, to examine the spending of ministries in this government. Where does that process start? That process starts with the tabling of a budget in this House that by our orders sets the clock running so that ministries then have to give the real facts and figures of what they're prepared to do with the people's money and subject themselves to the scrutiny of

people like the member from Kitchener, looking at, on behalf of the people, what's being done with their money.

What happened this year? This document dressed up like other years, looking a lot like what happened in other years, avoided that scrutiny or we would be in estimates committee today. The member opposite knows this is true. We would have seen a booklet like this, the detailed spending, aligning this political document with the actual money we're asking people to shell out of their pockets, and then we would get document after document, the detailed estimates of ministries, being tabled on a timetable set by this House to protect the public interest.

That doesn't take place currently. This budget not being tabled in its current fashion, we are weeks away from being able to exercise this. The public's right to be defended in their surrender of revenue and so on—as the member from Renfrew-Nipissing says so elegantly, "supplies"—to render those supplies has been harmed here. Has it been deliberately harmed? I leave that for others to say. Is this just some trick picked up from the Republican workshops that too many of the people employed by the party in power go to down south? I don't know. It's a good possibility. It's a decent possibility, but what it does is it gets in the way of showing respect for people and the money they give to this government in a most fundamental way.

I chair the estimates committee. I do that in a non-partisan fashion. I don't add commentary; I just make sure people around the table get a chance to ask these questions. They are thwarted and don't get a chance to ask those questions. The members opposite know that means that perhaps never will this budget be subject—if they take us to an election, that means that never will the propositions put forward as if they were the act of the government as a whole, not just one political party—are true or not true.

I will tell you that something said in that document and repeated in the throne speech will be proven not to be completely accurate. An example would be the funding of education. The government infers that it has followed the Rozanski report that it commissioned last fall. It was at least significantly enough impacted by people's concerns about education, it had to appoint somebody else to look at the job it was doing, to look at what exactly was happening to the students in Ontario schools in terms of this government. That review was done and it said that students in this province were being shortchanged significantly, and an immediate fix of that was required or the financial health of school boards was in immediate jeopardy and a number of things would have to happen.

In the language of the budget, in the language of the throne speech that followed, but not tied to the detailed estimates, scrutiny, the government would have us believe that's all taken care of, when in fact less than 31% of what was needed by our schools is being provided by this government. There are people out there today who probably think some of their money is going to finally fixing the problem. That impression has been cultivated by ads taken out on TV and by a budget that wasn't done

in this House. Was it deliberate? Was it on purpose that the government, not having a good answer, wanted to take some advantage, wanted to control the environment so it could somehow sell its poor answer? I think in this case, whether there is a 28-day writ period or hours of estimates committee, we will get the truth on the table, but it will be made harder by this act of avoidance of the rights of Parliament and of the respect due to the people in this province.

I note as well that the member for Willowdale talked about being anxious to debate, and yet we sat 138 days waiting for a debate from the member for Willowdale and others. I again hope that some of the responses we've heard so far this afternoon from the government are initial reactions—maybe shock. Maybe they would rather not come to terms with this, but I think we have a larger need in this House and a larger need for this debate. We have an opportunity to do the harder work.

It would be easy to work around this House, the people with the different-looking uniforms, the panels, the archaic-looking nature of this, and to go to things that people are familiar with, like TV studios and giving quick 30-second-only answers. We, as a group, have probably been guilty of allowing this House to slip into the irrelevance where even the Republican-trained consultants for the government would consider taking the budget outside of this House.

1730

But the harder work that needs to be done is to make this place work, to make it not only the last place, in terms of respect, where respect is retained for people and their ability to be levied taxes, but where they start to see that this House generates solutions that matter in their lives.

As I speak, there are numerous cameras pointed at me. This is, in effect, a TV studio. I would say that there are many people out there watching the workings of this House. A government, or members, prepared to work harder at making this House relevant and respected would use and take advantage of that, publish listings of what's happening in this House and set up discussions and debate that would really matter in this chamber. That's what we get paid to do. We don't get paid just to put up with the machinations of individual parties that want to gain power, because the whole point of gaining power is to effectively make Parliament work.

I would say to you that in the reaction that happened to this event—and I do think the Speaker was well in order in referencing the public here, because that's what gives us relevance. It is not just our precedents and the storied, hundreds of years of history of English parliamentary tradition; it is about the people who live in my riding of Parkdale-High Park and in every riding in this province. There are people in this province who are too tired, too hungry, too sick and too busy to notice what happens in this place. But if you sat down—and maybe we will soon—and talked to many of them, they assume that we look after their business. They assume, even as critical as they can be of some of our behaviours, that we

look after them, that somehow here in Canada a civil society persists, despite the differences across the aisle.

I put to you that this act with this particular budget, this act of disrespect, counters that. It fails that expectation. It goes against the grain of every person's reasonable expectation of what we do. Every member of this House needs to respond accordingly and fulsomely the best they can about how we're going to do something about that, how we're going to bring back to them some idea that we aren't here just feathering our nests, pandering to our egos and making ourselves feel better by walking around and having people call us MPPs. If we mean something, we will stand in our place. Our place is here in this House. Our place is here on behalf of approximately 105,000 others. We are not better than them. We don't get to be arbitrary on their behalf. We get to work for them. We don't work, and this place doesn't work, unless we put the budget, the asking of money, and frankly a lot more of the fundamental issues, on the floor of this House and unless we roll up our sleeves and make either committees or some new ways of making that happen.

We have, in our program, hopefully matched by ideas from other parties, the idea of citizen juries that could work alongside parliamentary committees so that we get some objective opinion from time to time. There may be demographics or experience that we need to draw on. But we need to engage people in this. Working around them with an infomercial is the height of disrespect. It may seem clever; it may seem like the right thing to do. The next step, I suppose, will be that each one of us will cut music videos, so we'll just overwhelm people with a barrage of images. It won't be a music video on my part, but it may be on some others.

But where do we end up? I think what we have here, the reason we stand in a place that has lasted this long, that has weathered crises on behalf of the people of this province, sister to another Parliament in Ottawa that has weathered crises on behalf of the people of this country, is because it can be made to work. The essence of it is the goodwill of each of us.

I want to just address that very briefly: each of us. We do have a fundamental problem here: we're not all equal in this House. There are people, in fact, outside of this House who have more influence, as many have said in different ways and in different times, some fairly recently, than the elected members here. We have proposed to change that, to only chain the members to the program that they go out and explain to their voters at the time of the election and to free them to make other kinds of votes. I think if people would be honest—and this is the day to be honest about what we do—some of that committee work that's being done at public expense is not generating its yield. People are not getting their money's worth. I've seen government members make good and pointed comments, and then somehow they don't make it to the afternoon session.

I think that's wrong. I think we all own a piece of that problem: everything we do to diminish the standing of



members in this House. I don't live in any kind of Pollyanna world, where I would say, "Everybody in this House will make decisions all the time." But there is a huge difference, and it exists in other Parliaments in other parts of the world.

In fact, in the mother Parliament in Britain, people stand on their feet more often, say what they think and do what they know is right. That needs to come into this House. We should use this as the opportunity to introduce it to the Parliament of Ontario: the standing of members in their place.

I got involved because I saw decisions being made that I thought were out of touch with the people of this province, and I thought maybe I could bring a perspective. I didn't think I would become a parliamentarian, but I did. I'm here, and today, debating this resolution, hearing from Mr Conway, I'm a little prouder to be that.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I'm happy to speak to this motion. Also—I'm not sure I'm happy to say this—there are times when I feel sorry for this government, sorry for some of the members and some of the things they do. Sometimes I think there's something wrong with me that I should feel sorry about them, but there are times that I feel that way.

I actually believe that you didn't mean to subvert the conventions of this place. I actually believe that. I actually believe you never thought, good heavens, there would be such an attack on the government for subverting the conventions, attacking the normal way we do things. In fact, I actually believe that the whiz kids, the brain trust, the highly paid young people, those who are paid much more, almost twice as much as we, those are the people who went to Ernie Eves and a couple of other ministers and then to the caucus and said, "We've got a bright idea. We take the budget out and say we're going to democratize this place and we're going to give you direct democracy and this is how we're going to do it. We're going to take the budget out of the Legislature, give it to the people, and they're going to love it."

Here's what I think. I suspect Ernie Eves said, "Hmm, I don't know about that. It's a tough one. It could go either way. But it sounds like a good idea. I don't know. Let's consult a couple of ministers." I suspect a couple of ministers were part of that and they thought about it and they said, "Hmm, it's a novel idea," because this is the government of novel ideas.

**Ms Churley:** Wait a minute.

**Mr Marchese:** But this is what I think goes on. So I suspect a couple of other ministers thought about this and said, "Yes, this is good. But we should consult the rest of caucus, because you never know, right? This is a break from the rules. Can we sell it?"

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I will not have this talking. Maybe you've come in since I made this clear before. In case you have, I'll repeat it once more: I'll not have it.

The Chair recognizes the member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not sure what the ruling was about, Speaker.

**Ms Churley:** It's about us.

**Mr Marchese:** I was just on the floor here, speaking.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll not warn the member for Toronto-Danforth again.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you very much, Speaker, for intervening from time to time.

Anyway, as I was saying, the cabinet ministers probably said, "Let's take it to the caucus just to find out what they think, because this is breaking from convention, and it would be nice to have caucus on board as we take the budget out to the people with our direct democracy approach." I suspect caucus, with some division, said, "Yeah, this is great. Let's go."

1740

They never dreamt that there would be an uproar with the public, let alone the media. I suspect some of them thought, ministers and caucus members, that they might have to take a hit from one or two media people, a couple of people out there who might think this is not good because a budget should be in the Legislature. But I suspect most of you thought the majority of the people and the media would simply let this go, and in fact that they would love it: "Not that they would hate what we are doing or attack us for taking this out, but in fact love it." I suspect most of you thought the media were going to praise you for doing what you were doing. I actually believe that, and I believe most of you believed that too.

How deeply wrong most of you were when you realized, "My God, this is getting out of hand." Day after day, you were taking a beating from the media; day after day, editorials attacking you for what you did; day after day, people writing to various newspapers with their opinions about how wrong you were for doing that, and you thought, "Holy God, how did this get out of hand? How do we pay people \$120,000, \$130,000, \$140,000, \$150,000 to come up with these ideas?" You're making \$80,000, \$82,000, \$85,000, \$90,000 if you're a PA or a minister, and you ask how come you're not brighter than the whiz kids, who are paid so much more than you? I hope some of you bright caucus members, after these whiz kids came up with this idea, decided you had better cut their pay, because someone has to pay when they make a mistake. I know you're not going to take a pay cut. Why should you? You didn't decide on this; the whiz kids decided on that.

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** Make them pay.

**Mr Marchese:** I hope you make someone pay for that blunder, because it was a blunder.

What's worse, however, is that when I think I should feel sorry for you, instead of diminishing your arrogance or taking a more subdued approach to the issue, you become even more arrogant. In the face of the attacks from the media, all of you confront the media, including the aggressive campaign against the Speaker for the rumblings and the suggestions he was making. How dare the Speaker make a suggestion that what you were doing was wrong? The Speaker was doing his job. The Speaker was saying, "What's the point of having an assembly, a

Parliament, where things normally get debated, but they're taken out of here?" The Speaker was taking the position that there's something wrong with that.

Instead of you being subdued by it, being guided by that opinion and saying, "Maybe we made a mistake"—some of you probably did. I think Bob Wood may have; I forget now. There may have been one or two who said, "This is a tad wrong." But not one minister, not the deputy House leader, not Eves, not one of them that I remember anyway, suggested, "Yes, maybe the Speaker is right, maybe we made a mistake," and maybe suggested, "We'll never do it again." No. With the usual arrogance typical of this government, they attacked the Speaker—and viciously. I thought that was wrong of you. That's why when I feel sorry for you, I then correct myself mighty quick, because I don't see you learning from your mistakes. I certainly didn't see it in the follow-up to those discussions after March. I didn't see it from any of the ministers. As a result, I lose the pity that otherwise I might have for you.

I supported the opinions of the Speaker when he spoke against what was happening. You should have stopped, as both the media and the public were attacking you, day in and day out. But you guys don't learn, so you deserve the odium of this assembly, at least on this side, and the odium of the rest of the public. There's another word. Which one would you use? You deserve it, is my point of view.

The motion here suggests, when you introduce a budget, that it be presented here in this Legislature; that we be the first recipients is the way the motion is worded.

The House leader for the government says, "There's a problem with that because if we were to accept this motion, that would mean the lock-up that normally precedes the presentation of the budget in this place wouldn't happen." My sense is that, again by tradition, that is part of the motion and while not explicit it is indeed implicit. So I can't imagine that the Speaker or the opposition parties or the government would then say, "Ah, the motion doesn't say that. Therefore, in the future, if we were to adopt this, we wouldn't have a lock-up." I just don't see that. It's almost silly.

While the deputy leader for the Conservative Party raised good questions about the implications of a ruling, in the future, about what this government can and cannot do, while he raises good questions about future rulings of the Speaker on other matters, I'm not sure it relates necessarily to the issue of where budgets should be. I think this discussion is directly related to the fact that this budget should have been presented and debated in this House, giving us, the opposition members, the opportunity to debate with you in agreement or disagreement with what you have to present. We, after all, whether the government likes it or not, represent hundreds of thousands of people across this province.

That's democracy as we understand it, and that's what newspapers and other people were saying. This motion connects directly to the issue of budgets, and I suspect primarily throne speeches as well. It could stretch in the

future in other areas no doubt. Rulings could be made that connect to different issues in different ways, but I don't see that. But yes, the questions Mr Stockwell raises are good for thought, but quite frankly I don't think one way or the other even if we added a different wording to this that the government would support it. The government cannot be seen to be supporting an opposition motion that then leads the government to in fact agree with the ruling of the Speaker that it is a matter of *prima facie* contempt.

While it is true there's nothing they can do to change what the Speaker did, said, and now has done, there is *prima facie* contempt—

**Mr Kormos:** End of story.

**Mr Marchese:** —and it's finished, quite right.

This government says there are implications. I am not sure whether there are any other legal or political implications if this motion is to be defeated or to be passed. I have no doubt it will be defeated because the government will defeat it. The government will not want to admit they made a mistake, and that's part of the arrogance of this government. That is a serious problem majority governments face all of the time. It doesn't matter what political party is in power. If they have a majority, they tend to be arrogant because absolute power, as it is in a majority government, corrupts us all.

That's why New Democrats, by the way, talking about the suggestion of Mr Wood from London West about how we democratize this place, support the proportional representation system that almost virtually guarantees that we not have majority governments, not at least all of the time. A proportional representation system would guarantee a certain number of seats—it could be 20, it could be 25, it could be 30—that we would have on the basis of the popular vote the parties get. That means that generally speaking, opposition parties, whoever they may be, would be entitled to more seats than they actually get under the model of the British system of first past the post.

1750

If we want to talk about how we democratize, there's a lot more than the suggestions probably made by Mr Wood, the member from London West. I suggest to him that he look at the suggestion New Democrats make on proportional representation. I'm not sure whether he supports it or not, but if he wants to talk about how you make this place a little more democratic, a lot less arrogant, particularly from the benches of the government, that's one suggestion that he could take.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Sorry, Duncan?

**Mr Duncan:** How about proportional allocation of debate in the House?

**Mr Marchese:** You'd like that, eh? If Liberals find themselves in this place, I'm sure he wouldn't share that opinion.

So we are saying that this government made a mistake, that the whiz kids behind the scenes made profound mistakes for the money they're getting, that this govern-



ment did not in the beginning believe they were subverting a democratic, parliamentary process. What they did was highly political. Their budget presentation at Magna Corp was a political act. It wasn't a parliamentary issue, an act to subvert this place; it was an act to politically advance their interests. That's what that was about. They don't want to say it, but, good citizens watching this program, that's what that budget was all about. It was about bringing it to the public in a novel way. It was about saying to the people, "Now you can have your say. We're taking it away from the opposition parties and giving it to you. That's real democracy." That's the way they wanted to sell it to you. They take this budget to Magna International—remember, Mr Stronach is one of their buddies. He earns about \$50 million a year; a big contributor to the Conservative party. That's not why they went there necessarily. I wouldn't have taken this budget there. I thought it was a dumb thing to take it there of all places; please. But they thought by taking it to the people, they would love us.

All I want to say to you is, admit you were wrong. Admit that the politics of what you did were profoundly wrong. If you do that from time to time, opposition parties might say, "We understand why you did it. You made a mistake. You admit it. You acknowledge it. We move on." But when you don't acknowledge your mistakes, it makes it harder for us. It makes it so hard for us when we see a picture—I think it was Tony Clement—it was a nice, little one, wasn't it, in the budget at Magna International where they had these pictures? Nice. You looked good, I thought. Ecker and—I forget whether Minister Flaherty was in that picture. There were some nice photo ops. It was an election-readiness kind of photo—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** You weren't there, Jim?

**Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** That was my brother.

**Mr Marchese:** That was your brother. He's joining in the debate with a little bit of humour. That's nice. But I saw a couple of you, anyway. It was just about election readiness.

By the way, I actually believed you guys wanted to call the election at that time. Yes, Jimmy, I actually believed you guys were ready for the election. But when you fouled up, unbeknownst to you—and for two and a half weeks you were beaten up the media and all the public in your ridings, outside of your ridings—you said, "Damn, we can't call this election now."

Then you had to say, "This is not about an election, or God's sake. No, this is about presenting some ideas to the public. We want them to have a say. Good God, it's not about elections." What's not about elections? It was amusing to hear you guys. It was amusing to hear the way you tried to explain that whole fiasco to the public, because you couldn't fool anybody. It was an election budget. So for two weeks, you got beaten up; you said, "No, we can't have the election."

Then you had SARS coming along and you stayed quiet for that, remember? That was great leadership.

Tony, great leadership for you guys. February—you guys knew. Not a word from you or the Premier. In March, with you guys in the depth of SARS, not a word from you; not a word from Premier Eves. That was real leadership. Then, come Easter you and the Premier, you're off to save the world. At the end of the SARS process Tony goes off. He says, "We're going to beat this thing." That was very cute, I thought. Anyway, talk about leadership: the fiasco of the budget, then SARS, then he says, "Damn, we can't call this election now. We've got to wait. Now what do we do?"

Now you're looking for the right time. Of course, this ruling didn't help. You've got a couple more days of this. "What are we going to do? When are we going to call the election? Should we call it maybe Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday"—whatever day the election lands, because it has to land on a Thursday. "Should we wait? We're going to get beaten up. Is this good? Is this bad?" You guys don't know. You don't have a clue.

**Mr Kormos:** But who will be the next leader of the Conservative Party?

**Mr Marchese:** Who will be the next leader of the Conservative Party?

**Mr Kormos:** There's going to be a leadership convention after—

**Mr Marchese:** Because Ernie won't stick around. Well, Tony's in line. Jim is here; he's in line. They're going to have a couple of candidates running.

**Mr Kormos:** Do they want Ernie to win?

**Mr Marchese:** Well, I don't know who they want to win. I don't know whether it's Tony or Jim. I don't know who the public wants. Who knows what the Tories want? What I do know is that the Tories—Peter, I've learned a lesson out of this—whatever ruling comes out of this, whether they're voting for or against, they're never going to do this again. I'm serious. After the beating they took, the Tories will never do this again. I'll wager 10 bucks with you, Peter. They'll never do this again.

**Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** In the short time that I have in my debate today, I will focus on a couple of issues. My colleagues have already eloquently spoken on the issue of the ruling today. My colleagues on the government side have certainly made a lot of the comments that I would make.

But I want to talk about what I feel is my position as an MPP representing my constituents in the House. What's important to the Thornhill riding and constituents in my riding are their wants, their dreams, the things they feel are important to their families. That's why they elected me to be here: to be involved in this debate, to vote on the issues that come forth and to express their views on their behalf. I take pride in representing the riding of Thornhill here in this House.

One of the things I've heard a lot of the MPPs in this House talk about is the importance not only of what we do here in the Legislature but also the importance of what we do outside the Legislature: things we do in committees, things we do in consulting with all of the constituents and also the things we do in the constituency

office, which is also very important. I heard that from a lot of my colleagues here, even across the House. They talk about the things that are important to them and the work they do.

In the short time I have, I want to highlight a particular situation that came to my attention just this week. A mother, Aurelia Bertocchi, called me and said that her son, Massimo, who is in track and field in his high school, was to compete on Monday for the York region championship. Because of the SARS issue, the coach for this team did not attend a specific meeting. According to the constitution and regulations, this teacher was supposed to have attended this meeting. Because this coach didn't attend, the whole team was disqualified from competing. Here's a situation where a coach, a representative of a team, did not fulfill a certain responsibility, albeit with due reason. This person was afraid to go into this facility because of the SARS scares. But what happened was that a whole group of students was not allowed to compete. She called me in a frantic rage, saying, "How could this happen?" Her son, Massimo, who has ranked sixth nationally in the high jump in the junior division, was not going to have the opportunity to compete. We worked with the mother, with the school

board, with the Minister of Education, and I'm pleased to say that the ruling was overturned and Massimo and 24 other students from St Joan of Arc will now be competing on Monday in the track and field championship.

This is an example of what we do as representatives of our community and of the important things we also do outside the House, not only in the Legislature.

I also want to highlight some of the important things that came out of the budget, things that are important to my community: investments in education, investments in health care. It's important to note that all of the investments which are in the budget are going to be implemented. We will be involved in debating the budget in the Legislature. All of these issues are important, not only to the constituents of Thornhill but to the constituents in all of the municipalities in Ontario. I also had the opportunity to consult with a number of mayors and counsellors, and their opinions are going to be well represented here in this Legislature. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being six of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
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Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 12 May 2003**

**Lundi 12 mai 2003**



Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 12 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 12 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT OUTRAGE AU PARLEMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2003, on the motion by Mr Conway arising from the Speaker's ruling of May 8, 2003.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I would ask the leader of the official opposition just for a quick minute. There is a point of order from the member for York West.

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Since I won't have the occasion, once Mr McGuinty begins his delivery, we have the pleasure today of having members from the wonderful family of Fossacesia. They came to their own place to see our own legislative building here and to see the House in action as well. So I want to welcome members of the Fossacesia family and members of the York West riding association as well. Welcome.

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** I kind of have mixed feelings about participating in this debate. On the one hand, I welcome the opportunity to talk about some of the aspects of the privilege connected with the work we do in this absolutely wonderful institution, and too often in the cut and thrust of daily politics we lose sight of that. But on the other hand, I cannot help but express dismay about how we've come to this. How could it be that in a parliamentary democracy in the western world, at the beginning of the 21st century, we are actually entertaining a motion that talks about the primacy of Parliament as the initial recipient of the budget?

What happened here was that the government—not to put too fine a point on it—tried to circumvent democracy. I think we can all understand that democracy is slow, it is messy, it is cumbersome, it is inefficient and it's wonderful. The government lost sight of the value of the democratic institution itself and the Parliament, of the importance that we should always attach to conventions and rules and process. The government tried to pull a fast one on the people of Ontario.

One of our shared concerns—and I know that I speak for all members of the House on this matter—is the cynicism felt by so many voters, so many Ontarians, so many Canadians for that matter, for politics, politicians and our political institutions. What the government did when they decided to present the budget outside the

Legislature was to add to that level of cynicism, and that affects all of us.

Neil Finkelstein, the constitutional expert, said that what the government did to the budget process was an affront to democracy. He's one of this country's leading constitutional experts. What I thought was particularly offensive about the whole thing was that the government dressed it up as an exercise in bringing the budget closer to the people when, in fact, they were doing exactly the opposite.

What I'm going to argue here today is that the events leading up to the so-called Magna budget were not a one-off aberration; they didn't happen in a vacuum. Nobody who has followed politics in this province during the course of the past eight years, certainly nobody who has followed politics closely, would have been entirely surprised. The Harris-Eves government has simply not been kind to democracy in Ontario. For example, they have severely limited debate in the Legislature. In their first term, they changed the rules 42 times to restrict debate and limit the power of elected representatives. That's 42 times. They have forcibly closed debate on 60% of the bills presented at Queen's Park—60%. By way of comparison, in 1985, that figure was 1%.

In a majority government situation there isn't much that opposition parties can do to prevent passage of bills, and that's as it should be. But what the opposition can do and should be able to do and has a responsibility to do is debate those bills, hold them up to critical examination so that at the end of day the best possible bills are being passed, with the public made aware of any flaws that might exist.

I just can't think of a more important bill, a bill which warrants as much scrutiny and debate, than the budget. The budget is the bill through which the government levies billions of dollars in taxes and it's the bill through which the government breathes life into its priorities through its plan of expenditures. This kind of debate and scrutiny and question period is supposed to be how the system works. That's democracy at work. As I said, it's slow, it's messy, it is cumbersome, it can be tiresome, it can be inefficient, but there is no better system that has yet been devised by humanity. Ramming through bills without proper debate weakens our system of democracy. Reading the budget to a hand-picked audience at an auto parts plant in Brampton was just an exotic manifestation of something that the Tories have been doing for quite some time now.

We have a problem in Canada, but I would argue it is more pronounced here in Ontario: people are losing con-

fidence in their system of democracy, in their politicians, their political representatives, and in their political institutions. The most obvious manifestation of this happens on election day when 50% of eligible voters stay home and sit on their hands. This is a serious problem. It's even worse among young people, when up to 75% stay home on election day.

We're determined to do something about that. We believe that we have a shared objective—all members of this Legislature—a shared responsibility to inspire greater confidence in politics, in our political institutions, and in our system of democracy. If we allow this erosion to continue, if we allow people's confidence to wane even further when it comes to the work that we can do together in Parliament, then we are treading dangerously close to losing our ability to come together, because that's fundamentally what government and Parliament are all about; it's how we come together to help one another overcome challenges that are simply too big for us to overcome on our own. If people lose confidence in our ability to come together and do good things, we'll have a very, very serious problem on our hands. We intend to do something about that, and I'll tell you how, specifically.

1340

We're going to start by scrapping the changes made by the Harris-Eves government that concentrated power in the Premier's office, thereby making the Legislature almost irrelevant.

We're going to give legislative committees more clout, enhancing their powers to call ministers and question them in depth about the issues of the day.

We're going to give power to an all-party committee to initiate legislation. We saw something fabulous that took place in an all-party sense recently, when a committee chaired by a member of the government dealt with the issue of energy. It's remarkable, the good work that was done through that process and it is remarkable—Mr Gilchrist, I gather, chaired this committee—how much good work we can get done when nobody tries to take the credit. Some very substantive, positive recommendations came from that work, and we intend to follow on that precedent and give the power to an all-party committee to initiate legislation.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** Are you trying to muzzle me?

**Mr McGuinty:** If it works.

We're going to make sure that MPPs are free to do their jobs, which is to represent the views of their constituents. We have the best-informed citizenry in the history of this country and we still treat them, by treating their representatives—we treat both of them like children.

With certain exceptions, like specific campaign promises and non-confidence votes, MPPs outside of cabinet in our government will be free to vote against the government.

We're also going to make sure that the government is accountable in question period. Cabinet ministers will be

required to attend two thirds of question period sessions and will be fined if they do not. Question period is where the government answers to the people. In a democracy, that shouldn't be an optional thing.

There's something else that will change. We don't believe in the Premier's divine right to call an election. Premiers, and I speak now of all Premiers of all political stripes, don't call elections when they think it serves the public interest; Premiers call elections when they think they can win. We're going to set fixed dates for elections, every four years, and we're going to put an end to all this pre-election guessing game nonsense, to say nothing of taxpayer-funded advertising propaganda.

So far, this government has spent over \$250 million on partisan, political, self-promotional advertising. We've all seen those ads. They're appearing nightly on television at very expensive time slots, whether for health care or for education. It seems to me that if we have any money for health care today we should be putting that money into health care and not into health care ads, and if we have any money for education we should be putting it into our classrooms and not into education ads.

When a government uses the voters' own money to try to and spin them, it only creates further cynicism felt by the public for politics and our political institutions.

Twice now, I'm proud to say, I've introduced a private member's bill and in government we will make that bill the law. That bill simply says that you cannot use taxpayer dollars for partisan, political, self-promotional government advertising.

We also believe that the time is long past for a full public debate about voting reform. When 50% of eligible voters can't be bothered to cast a ballot, something is clearly wrong. I believe that an important part of any plan to inspire greater confidence in our system of democracy is to give Ontarians the opportunity to choose the way they elect their provincial representatives. After all, Ontarians never chose this first-past-the-post system. We inherited this system. I think it's time we made a conscious decision to either keep it or trade it for another. There are a number of alternatives out there: proportional representation, preferential ballots, and there are different mixed models. If any of these make our citizens feel more involved in the system, if any of these encourage more of our citizens to take part in the system, then we should exchange a better system for the one we have now.

In government, we're going to engage the public in a broad conversation about the nature of our voting system, its strengths and weaknesses, and the nature of the alternatives and their strengths and weaknesses. We're going to hold a referendum on whether we should keep or replace the current system and what we should replace it with.

But we won't stop there. Whatever system we end up with, people still have to vote, and we will encourage them to do that. Permanent voters' lists were used for the first time last election, and there were just too many problems. We're going to use supplementary, targeted



voter enumeration to ensure that every eligible Ontarian can cast a ballot. Our goal is to increase voter turnout by at least 10%.

We're also going to begin to pave the way for Internet voting. We're going to ease it in, beginning with bank-machine-style kiosks at voting stations as an option. Where they have had on-line voting, they've had a dramatic increase in voter turnout, especially among young people. I've seen increases to the tune of some 600% in some of the states where they have employed on-line voting. Young people are spending much of their time there today, and we have a responsibility to make a real, concerted effort to reach out to them, especially given that 75%, in some cases, are staying home on election day.

It was almost 30 years ago that I took some time off after high school and got a job as an orderly at a hospital in Ottawa called the National Defence Medical Centre—I know some members have heard me talk about this before, but it bears repetition. My job was to provide basic, hands-on care to World War I and World War II veterans who had come back and were badly injured. They went over there as boys, in many senses, I believe. I know that there was a lot of propaganda, because I've heard about it from some of the men on the ward, but at the end of the day, they went because they felt there was something worth fighting for, and they put it all on the line for us. Those men have all passed away—that was 30 years ago, as I say—but they would be disheartened to learn that so many people don't vote.

We have a responsibility. I know, in some ways, it's probably easier for us to talk about the responsibilities of government and accountability to Parliament when we sit on your left-hand side, Mr Speaker, because we feel especially attached to this whole responsibility, accountability and holding the government to task. But there is, I think, something here that is bigger than all of us, and my colleague Sean Conway spoke to that in a very compelling and eloquent way. I want to emphasize once again our responsibility as legislators, each and every one of us, to uphold time-honoured traditions which at first blush may seem cumbersome, inefficient and ineffective.

I think if there's a good lesson we can draw from what happened when the government decided to introduce its budget at an auto parts plant, it is that notwithstanding that cynicism of which I spoke, felt by so many Ontarians for politicians and political institutions, they reacted in an almost visceral way. They said, "You know, you can pull a lot of things over us, but we feel there's something fundamentally wrong with taking the budget and delivering it outside the Legislature. You are demeaning our institution. You're demeaning our legislators, our elected representatives." Most importantly, the sense I got from listening to Ontarians who reacted to this so viscerally was that they felt the government was demeaning them. They still attached a tremendous amount of importance to the work we do in here. That's the good news. They may have felt that cynicism, but what they conveyed to all of us was, "Don't go there. Don't try to do those kinds of

things. We still believe in our system of democracy. We still believe in the role of Parliament. We still believe in the role of our elected representatives." Fundamentally, they were saying we can do great things when we work together. I think that's what the people of Ontario were saying.

1350

The motion put forward by my friend Mr Conway is stunning in its simplicity. It simply reads, "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario." I don't think any of us could have ever predicted that we would be debating this kind of motion on the floor of this Legislature—ever. But we find ourselves here today doing that. I think it gives us all an opportunity to revisit the value of the work we do here, to revisit the value we attach to this wonderful institution and to recommit ourselves to our system of democracy—yes, Speaker, with all of its rules, all of its precedent, all of its traditions.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** First, I would like to say that on the weekend I had an opportunity to speak with my son, Erin, who has just finished law school. He took great interest in your ruling, and I have to attribute much of the research—between the two of us, we've looked at this from his informed academic perspective.

I thought I would offer thoughts on your ruling on *prima facie* contempt. As all of the honourable members assembled here today know quite well, I'm a frequent speaker on issues of concern to my riding, as well as those to the province of Ontario. On all occasions, regardless of the issue, I premise my remarks through you, Mr Speaker, as your office serves an important role in the governance of this province. The role of the Speaker in this province and this House of assembly or in the federal House of Commons is part of parliamentary tradition and convention that serves our democracy very well.

I rise today in response to your decision to give the matter of the 2003 budget speech priority over all House business. I think it is important, however, to review the concerns raised by the members from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Niagara Centre. It is also very important, however, to review the role of the Speaker of this assembly in the circumstances surrounding your *prima facie* contempt ruling.

The most important facet of the office of Speaker in this modern age is that of neutrality to perform his or her duties as the unbiased servant of the Legislative Assembly. While serving the assembly, the Speaker has also become the *de facto* official or person in control of the debate. In this position of authority, all members can look to the Speaker for guidance on parliamentary issues and for the resolution of disputes in a most expeditious and fair manner. It may surprise many in this House to learn that this was not always the case. In fact, the origin of the Speaker of the British House of Commons was that the Speaker was an adviser or confidant of the reigning monarch. In this capacity, a motivated Speaker could control the substance of debate in the House in accord-



ance with specific objectives or personal motives. In fact, early Canadian colonies, including Upper Canada, inherited this activist notion of the role of the Speaker in the early assemblies of the country. Far from independent, many Speakers in the assemblies that eventually formed the Dominion of Canada were the most political members of the assembly. Many Speakers were actively involved in political organizations and movements that directly conflicted with the government of the day.

Slowly the role of the Speaker evolved into an office of non-partisanship. In fact it is this unbiased role of the Speaker and the removal of the cut and thrust of partisan political debate that permits the Speaker to serve the assembly and provide for the effective governance of the province.

The office of Speaker, so to speak, evolved to become the unbiased servant of the House of assembly, which required the member selected as Speaker to leave outward partisanship behind on elevation to that office. This requires the Speaker to withdraw from partisan activities, such as caucus meetings, and assume almost an aloof posture to ensure impartiality. In this matter, the office of the Speaker, both in convention and even in ceremonial garb, is akin to a justice of the court of the province who must retreat from his normal activities to ensure that justice is administered fairly and without bias.

I should note again that historically the Speaker, as you know, was not elected. There has been much discussion about tradition and parliamentary procedure and convention leading up to this debate, so historical developments of the office of the Speaker should be considered in this debate. Historically, the government leader, with the advice of cabinet, would select a Speaker from within the government benches and inform the opposition of that choice. On occasions when the government majority was tight, or when minority situations occurred, the Premier might decide to accede to an opposition member being chosen for the role of Speaker, but this was certainly not the norm. It was the convention in the early years of our country to permit that selection to advance to the Speaker's chair. In fact, the first business of the session following a general election has traditionally been the vote to ratify the Speaker. It has only been in the last number of decades that assemblies across the country have permitted a full election of the Speaker by the House or assembly.

It should also be noted that the parliamentary conventions surrounding the election of the Speaker have evolved steadily over the decades. Rather than this evolution being considered an affront to the tradition of the House, this gradual change was considered to be the maturation of the political process within our political heritage. In fact, the election of the Speaker in the House of Commons was the result of parliamentary reform initiatives considered by the committees of that House.

Some commentators have observed that this new election process for the Speaker of the assembly will often permit opposition parties to select their choice of Speaker based not on the most objective and unbiased of creden-

tials but perhaps more on an individual who might be more troublesome for the government or more activist in his approach.

In this circumstance, a government member may be more attractive to the opposition members and their votes if they offer to serve as more of a thorn in the side of government rather than in a more stoic and reserved role as Speaker. In other instances, all parties may decide to support the candidacy of a senior member of the assembly to assume the office of Speaker. In these situations, the members are recognizing the experience of senior members as individuals who have witnessed many years of debate in the House and have become similar to the corporate memory of the assembly.

I leave it to the members of the House today to decide whether that has been the case in Ontario since the convention was altered some time ago. Some might argue that the active lobbying and candidacy of prospective Speakers actually detracts from the requirements and authority of the office. Nonetheless, this election process has been part of the evolution of our assembly.

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario is now served by an office of Speaker who is elected by all members of the House to serve the assembly. The Speaker's chair remains in the House, but the member removes himself or herself from the regular role of a member of provincial Parliament and assumes a greater duty for the governance of the province. All other members of the assembly will respect his role, knowing full well that the office of Speaker serves the House itself and not any partisan objectives/motives.

The office of Speaker of the House in the Westminster parliamentary tradition has three distinct roles. First, the Speaker is expected to perform a number of ceremonial duties as part of the Legislative Assembly. Secondly, there is an administrative role to oversee the effective performance of the Legislature and the members of provincial Parliament. To carry out this administrative role, the Speaker is provided with staff and resources to ensure that members are afforded the proper tools to represent their constituents in the assembly. Third, and perhaps most important, there is a distinct quasi-judicial role of the Speaker. The Speaker presides over proceedings in the Legislative Assembly from the debate on the in the House to the conduct and decorum of members participating. The Speaker is to interpret the standing orders of the assembly in accordance with precedence and makes decisions on points of order and matters of privilege. It is this quasi-judicial role, in light of your recent ruling, Mr Speaker, that causes me some concern.

**1400**

It is understood and recognized that it's left to the House to decide upon whether contempt of Parliament has occurred or not. The Speaker does, however, serve an important gatekeeper function by determining whether a prima facie case of contempt does indeed exist. This is an important example of the intertwining of the quasi-judicial and administrative role of the Speaker of this House. Due to the gravity of this subject and the possible



implications flowing from a contempt ruling, it is absolutely paramount that the Speaker consider this issue impartially and in full consideration of the rules of this House and of available precedents. In this manner, the Speaker is performing a quasi-judicial function by making a preliminary ruling on the issue of contempt. While this step is not the final determination of the issue, it is nonetheless a decision that must be made in accordance with our legal and parliamentary traditions of this province. With respect, Mr Speaker, I am concerned that your decision did not accord with the principles of administrative justice and fairness that should have characterized your decision.

While the *prima facie* consideration is not the final determination of the issue of contempt, it is certainly a preliminary determination that requires the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness to be at the forefront of the decision-making and the role of the Speaker in this assembly.

I am sure that all members assembled here today would agree with the old legal adage that justice must not only be done, but justice must also be seen to be done. Respectfully, Mr Speaker, prior to your consideration of issues of contempt of Parliament, your personal views on the Brampton budget were well known throughout this House and indeed throughout the province. Your critical view of the process was most evident in several written media pieces and in your appearance on TVOntario.

This morning, Mr Speaker, I reread one of those interviews published in the *Globe and Mail* on March 15. Your views are startlingly clearly expressed and, I would submit, in a fashion most uncharacteristic of the office of the Speaker. Regarding the off-site budget, you expressed great displeasure: "This is not the right thing to do."

Mr Speaker, you then went on in the interview in a manner that some might describe as attempting to incite a caucus revolt within the government, "What can happen and what I believe should happen"—and this is a quote—"is the Conservative members, if they decide that five or six of them want to stand up and say this budget isn't the proper thing to do, they could get the Premier to back down by saying they are not going to support"—

**The Speaker:** Will the member take his seat, please. Point of order, the member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I refer you to the standing orders, in particular standing order 13(a) and standing order 13(b). Standing order 13(b) indicates that there shall be no debate permitted on a decision of the Speaker, and I submit that what we are hearing is debate about the decision made by the Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On the same point of order, the member for Windsor-St Clair.

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: All of standing orders 12 and 13 deal with order and decorum and conduct of a member of this House, and it appears to this side of the House, in any event, that the government member is now actively challenging the Speaker, or attempting to chal-

lenge the Speaker, for the ruling and to imply that the Speaker had somehow been biased.

I listened very carefully to the member's words—and I will await Hansard—but if my recollection and understanding of the words is reflected in Hansard, this represents an unprecedented challenge to the Speaker of this Legislature and would represent a dramatic attack on what has been an impartial decision by the Speaker that, in our view, breaches not only the standing orders but the precedents and conventions of this House.

We are increasingly concerned that the government is consciously attacking the Speaker at this point, and look to your direction and the direction of the table with respect to what is and what is not in order in the standing orders with respect to a challenge or a potential challenge to the Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Minister?

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** Mr Speaker, I would simply draw the House's attention to the statement that was made by the Speaker: "As I have said, only the House, not the Speaker, can make a finding that there has been a contempt of the House."

I've listened to the debate over the last few days, and quite clearly, with the greatest of the respect to the Opposition members, I sat here quietly and listened to their point of order. There has been a wide latitude of debate on this subject. You have stated yourself, sir, that you cannot find the contempt; only the House can. That's what we're here debating about. Now, although they may not like the position of the honourable member behind me, he's entitled to his position, and that's why we're debating it here today.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to remind the House that the item before the House is my motion, which reads, "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario." That is the motion currently before the House, and I would hope, in the interest of constructive action on a Monday afternoon, that we could all remember that.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am in agreement with the member for Renfrew with respect to what is before the House. I'm also suggesting to you that you have given a very wide berth with respect to what is debatable, what is before the House and what isn't before the House from the previous speeches that I've read and reviewed. I will ask you to look to Mr Kormos's comments with respect to this debate as the lead-off speaker for the NDP. It would seem to me to be fair—yes, that motion is before the House, but with your take on what was being put toward the House during Thursday's debate, the latitude I took was that you were allowing a very wide berth. If we're going to focus this now, it becomes very difficult to determine when we have to focus the debate and when we don't have to focus the debate, and I ask for your indulgence with respect to that.



**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** Mr Speaker, as one who commented on this very issue in favour of the validity of your ruling on Thursday I think I should speak to this. The member, of course, is debating the motion before the House. But your office, sir, is not so fragile as not to be helped by comment both in favour of something you've done or against something you've done. This member is not debating the ruling that you made on Thursday. This member is commenting on the ruling with a view to commenting on the motion, and I think it would be a very, very serious error, sir, and not contemplated by the standing orders, to limit comment on what you may do. I think it's quite important that there be full debate, because out of full debate will come a better result.

I say that as someone who thinks the ruling was sound from last Thursday and said so. If others take a different view, I think they're quite entitled to that, and it does not in any way diminish the respect for your office or for the rules of this House.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would very quickly—and most of it has been said—go back to your comments the other day when you said, "I have a lingering unease about the road we are going down, and my sense is that the House and the general public have the same unease." I'm feeling rather uneasy because where the member is going, as I see it, is a move of non-confidence in the Speaker, which is to my view quite a different issue and I hope we're not going there. But it seems to me that he's trying to open up a whole other issue by way of this debate that is really not before the House at this time.

**The Speaker:** I thank all the members. As the members will know, the ruling of the Speaker is not debatable. I'm put in a little bit of a difficult position because I'm caught in the middle at this time, for obvious reasons. It is the motion that we are debating. I know we sometimes have some latitude on the debates, and have had in this House over the last few years, where members tend to wander and Speakers who are in the chair tend to bring them back.

I will remind the member that the motion he is dealing with is the member for Renfrew's motion on the budget. I would ask him, as I would at all times, to stick to the motion. I will be listening very careful as we move forward.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I might add, considering it was a point of order brought forward by the opposition, that there were nine minutes and 28 seconds left for the member's speech. He's now down to three minutes. I would request that we go back to nine minutes and 28 seconds.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. We'll put the clock back. The member for Durham.

1410

**Mr O'Toole:** I would also like to put on the record very clearly that if there was anything that you found offensive in my remarks, it certainly was not my intention whatsoever. I would argue, Mr Speaker, that any occasion when you are speaking outside of this Legis-

lature, in fact, your duties are supposed to be implied as impartial. I would put to you that the comments I was making of your comments on TVO just proved exactly that. I wondered if it prejudiced your decision. I'm not in any way challenging anything you've said.

I also respect that the members on the other side in their remarks have also made reference to issues that are not specific—

**Mr Kormos:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Very quickly, once again the speaker returns to the very point: the member addressing the chamber is painting the Speaker as not having been impartial. I put to you, Speaker, that it's important that you make, with respect, a firm ruling on that today so that we don't start expanding the latitude around how one can, through the back door, debate the decision of a Speaker where one can't do it through the front door. I suggest to you the member has returned right back to the same message.

**The Speaker:** I thank the member very much. Again, myself and the table will be listening very carefully.

**Mr O'Toole:** Mr Speaker, your views are important, and all members in the House have the greatest respect for those. The point I'm trying to establish is that once you start to break from tradition—and the tradition that has been established is that the Speaker does remain impartial. I leave it to you to decide the case. The information that I'm putting forward is simply that it's a matter of information. And I say that there is a natural justice and a procedural fairness, as I have listened attentively to members on the other side of the House speaking on issues of relative insignificance in terms of the importance of this issue.

I would encourage all members to approach this with an open mind, as opposed to a closed mind. It is up to this House to make and listen to the debates, and I don't think the debate has been concluded. All I'm trying to point out is the Speaker, in your role as an impartial judge and in many respects a jury—that's exactly the point that I've been trying to establish.

There is a certain irony in this finding that there was perhaps an apprehension of bias surrounding your *prima facie* order. I would argue that the very reason parliamentary tradition developed a requirement for the Speaker to be non-partisan and beyond reproach, as I said before, was to ensure that impartiality and fairness in their decision-making. In fact, all of our parliamentary traditions surrounding the office of the Speaker attempt to foster the sense of independence and separation from the partisanship of issues before the House, from the positioning of the Speaker's chair between both sides of the House, to the tradition of the mace and the separate office and practices of the Speaker for the purpose of maintaining separation from the politics behind all of the issues before us.

It is this separation and impartiality that very much ensures and protects the integrity of the office. Traditionally, this office of Speaker has rarely commented on political issues outside of the House and has normally taken great pains to avoid influencing the decision of



members of the assembly or the impression of the public. Perhaps we should all endeavour to forge a political convention that a Speaker, originally from any side of the House, should only make statements in the House, not in scrums or in TV studios. Maybe that will be an unexpected benefit of this current debate. It will improve the debate and the role of the Speaker to be more highly respected, and to a higher standard. I would say any member sitting as Speaker should maintain a higher standard.

**Mr Duncan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This member is calling into question your ruling, your *prima facie* case. He is suggesting that you are biased, he is suggesting that you conducted this before being in possession of the facts and implying that somehow you were not fair in the decision.

As he reflected in his own remarks, the decision of whether or not there has been a contempt of this House does not rest with you, it rests with the House itself. You found a *prima facie* case based on evidence, presented that evidence to this House, backed up by the relevant authorities and made a final determination of a *prima facie* case. It will be up to the House to determine if there was contempt. What the member is saying is that your conduct in the lead-up to that decision—he is in effect, in our view on this side of the House, showing contempt for the Speaker and attempting to intimidate the Chair.

Sir Thomas More, the first Speaker of the British House, had his head chopped off by a government that tried to muzzle the Speaker. The impartiality of the Speaker is the essence of our Parliament, and I would suggest the member opposite is calling that into question. For our part on this side of the House, we don't believe the Speaker has not been impartial at all on any occasion.

**The Speaker:** Fortunately, some of the traditions do change about the Speaker losing his head. The member for Durham may continue.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** On the alleged point of order, Mr Speaker: The speaker had five minutes and 40 seconds on the clock. I would ask you if you could put the five minutes and 40 seconds back. Otherwise, we're going to be in a game where every member stands up, and we're going to have points of order popping up. It's really just a subversive way to get them to close down and not express their opinions.

**The Speaker:** Was the member asking for unanimous consent?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** No, Mr Speaker. I'm asking for you to make a ruling as to whether or not we can put it back to five minutes and 40 seconds.

**The Speaker:** We'll put the time back and try one more time. I want to say very clearly to the member that this is his last warning. We will move on to the next person in the rotation if you continue to attack the Chair.

**Mr O'Toole:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I understand that the time allocated for debate and response was the same for all members here, and I appreciate the fact that you're giving me the appropriate time which was allocated for each member. I also want to put it very clearly that these remarks are in fact my remarks and are—

### *Interjections.*

**Mr O'Toole:** This is one more example of how the fairness of the debate as I am approaching it is being challenged by those who would have no other way to know.

In fact, I'd remind the NDP members of the announcements they made in the social contract several years ago. They contained many fiscal and social implications beyond a budget statement. They were not made in the House. In fact, at that time, the challenge, as was cited in one of the precedents—the Liberal government in their day in 1988. It is the very substance that these members here are not prepared to listen to discussion of the fairness of the decision we're dealing with. Those are the arguments I'm putting forward. This was not seen to be in contempt but was seen as an attempt by Premier Rae to speak to greater matters due to the radical measures contained in the decision he was making. That is, the implication was that he was speaking to the people. You tried to reach consensus with the union leaders, as you would—and I appreciate that—but you were unable to reach a decision or gain consensus, so you tried to go directly to the people of Ontario. In fact, I would put to you that was the motive of our Minister of Finance.

Each member here tries to represent, in fairness, their constituents but also the interests of Ontarians. We need this opportunity to make sure there is an opportunity to speak directly to the people of Ontario. That, to me, is what this is about. In fact, if I look at many of the pre-budget announcements that are made federally, provincially in all provinces and in many jurisdictions, these announcements themselves are part of the budget. In many cases, they are the budget. In fact, I would put to you these trial balloons are often made and in some respects tested prior to the budget itself.

Any outgoing decision from here to look at Mr Conway's resolution would be quite controversial with respect to what was appropriate in terms of public input. So, as I see it, the motion is completely something that I have very grave difficulty trying to support.

I also think it's important for all members here to consider this as an opportunity to learn about the procedural role, not just of the Speaker, but of your duty in the House to represent as faithfully as possible your views on an issue. I would say to you that my position on the rear bench of the House often leaves me very frustrated by advice given to members on both sides of the House. But my respect for this assembly leads me to rise and speak on matters of importance to the citizens of Durham and to advance government and other public policy discussion that I feel is important to not only my constituents but indeed the people of Ontario.

1420

When a decision is made, there is generally a position of appeal in most court decisions. The case I've made here, or attempted to make despite the unreasonableness on the other side, is to bring forward the fact that there is a process. This debate is not to challenge in a negative sense but to review all of the information we have before



us in the precedents that have taken place in this House before this decision more recently on this *prima facie* finding of contempt. I would put to you, that only permits this debate to take place. The decision has not yet been made. I've tried to clarify where I stand, my position, and I'm prepared to listen to the speakers who will be following.

We heard from the Leader of the Opposition. I will cite that his speech made very little reference to the substance we are actually debating. He talked about the number of times the House has or hasn't sat, how many times a speaker spoke, his political platform, what he would do if he were leader. He hasn't got a clue what he would do as leader. In fact, this House is a good place to challenge his ability to lead whatsoever.

That is substantially the reason I believe the other side has gone completely off the rails. I'll be listening carefully, and what I'll be listening for is how often they actually agree with the decision or are talking about their political propaganda. That's what I'll be listening for in the few minutes that are remaining.

In conclusion, I want to put on the record that the opposition, in my view, is trying to delay the procedures of this House by confronting me and trying to disrupt the argument which I and my son, my oldest son Erin, who just finished law school—

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Guy Giorno.

**Mr O'Toole:** Mr Bradley, you have no idea what you speak of, which is typical of your performance in this House.

**The Speaker:** Before we continue—there is going to be some heated debate, I see—I would ask all members to please, kindly reflect not only on what they say regarding the Chair, which is a long-standing tradition, but also regarding other members.

Now in the rotation I believe it's the member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** This is truly a very significant debate in this Legislature, and probably could be—you can never tell these things—a defining moment in the history of this government. To see the government, upon hearing an independent ruling by the Speaker, take the tack, then, of attacking the Speaker is absolutely appalling to watch. To hear a member of this Legislature—and I ask the government House leader to have listened to all of the remarks of the member for Durham, all of the remarks he made, and if that is not an attack on the Speaker of this Legislature, I don't know that you have heard everything he has said.

To watch this government try to circumvent the democratic processes in this Ontario of ours is appalling not just to the many editorialists, not just to, as the Premier tried to say, the academics, the professors, the pundits, but also to many long-time Progressive Conservative members of your party and I suspect even some members of the Legislature who will remain silent in this debate. This is appalling, to watch the party of Bob Welch, who was one of the predecessors in St Catharines, a genuine parliamentarian; the party of Tom Wells; the party of

Bette Stephenson; the party of Bob Elgie; of Larry Grossman; of Frank Drea; the party which defended the rights of this Legislature, including now a man who is a justice, Roy McMurtry. To listen to arguments of this kind being put against the Speaker is absolutely unbelievable; to listen to a threat by the previous speaker from Durham that somehow we should bring back the appointed Speaker, as though to have a government toady in the office of the Speaker is what the government will threaten if somehow a Speaker dares to impose a ruling on this House or give a ruling to this House of the nature that we have heard from Speaker Carr.

I am surprised. I have to tell you that I thought you people—some of you not believing in democratic institutions—were at least politically wise enough to understand. Had the Premier stood in this House and said, "We thought we were doing the right thing, and maybe I still think it's the right thing today, but we've had a ruling from the Speaker and we've heard from the people of Ontario, and we were wrong and we won't do it again," think of the credit the Premier of this province would get by saying that. He would have been the lead, if you will, in all the stories, saying, "You know, maybe we made a mistake, and we're not going to do that again." People would have admired that. That would have been a wonderful opportunity for the government, and quite frankly it would have been good for the House.

Instead we get an attack on the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature and on the impartiality of that Speaker. Instead we get the story that everybody else but the government is wrong, including some very senior members of the Progressive Conservative Party at the local level, people who have come up to me and said, "I'm not necessarily going to vote for you people or anything of that nature, but I'll tell you that I thought the government was wrong in what it did." Those are the people you've turned off with this. You're turning off the democratic process, and for no good reason but simply because some whiz kids in the Premier's office said, "We've got a good idea. We can circumvent the House. We can go directly, so-called, to the people of this province instead of coming to the Legislature." Even people who really don't know about the rules of the Legislature and may not care much about them have come up to me in the street or at public meetings and said, "I think the government was wrong in what they did."

The government has suffered a major blow with this. It had a chance to recover. It had a chance to come back and say, "We were wrong, and we're not going to do it again." Some people, even on the front benches, kind of hinted that might be the case. I heard one member, for whom I have some considerable respect in terms of his observations of this House, speak about the ruling in a somewhat favourable way. Members have to do that independently. This is a ruling that affects all the House; this affects every member. To defend what some people in the Premier's office did as though you have to wear it is unbelievable. You don't have to wear it. I tell you that you don't have to wear it.



Tell the people from the Premier's office they were wrong. Get up in the House and say, "You know, maybe the Speaker has a point or maybe all those editorialists have a point or maybe those professors or those average individuals in our society have a point and we shouldn't do it and we won't do it again." But instead, you get up and try to defend the indefensible, and today you try to defend it with an attack on the Speaker himself. That's most unfortunate.

I must say that this is perhaps a defining moment for the government. What it tells people in the province, unfortunately for you, perhaps—because I'm not a prognosticator who can tell you the future—it will tell the people of this province that you can't be trusted with our democratic institutions.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** No, no.

**Mr Bradley:** That's what it will tell them. My friend from London-Fanshawe may not agree with that, but I'm telling you that's what happens. That's exactly what I think it is. And the abuse of our system continues. It's a pattern. They look at it as a pattern. They say, "The power is being concentrated in the Office of the Premier of the province."

We have the House, this Legislature to which all of us belong, not in session from December 12; we had a question period on December 12, 2002; the next question period was May 1, 2003—almost five months that this Legislature was not in session and not many committees of the Legislature in session. It might have been an excuse for not having the House in session if we had committees working all the time, carrying out its business. In the minds of many people in this province, the real reason for not delivering the speech in the Legislature was that the government simply didn't want the House to come back, didn't want to face question period on a daily basis, it didn't want to face the media scrum, as we call it here, on a daily basis. I understand that. I understand governments don't want to do that, but that is part of the accountability for which people fought in years gone by.

**1430**

I want to quote from the Speaker's ruling, because I think his words are words to which all of us and all the people of Ontario should listen. In his ruling, he said the following: "Having reflected on these authorities, I will apply them to the case before me now. It is hard to recall a time in recent memory when a matter of parliamentary process has so incensed people inside and outside this province. Many Ontarians from all walks of life have complained in an overwhelmingly negative way—to my office, to members directly, through various media, and to the government itself—that the government's approach to communicating the 2003 budget to Ontarians has undermined parliamentary institutions and processes.

"As I've already indicated, there have been occasions in the past when a Minister of Finance or a Treasurer has neither personally presented the budget in the House nor read the budget speech in the House. In the case at hand, however, the government indicated that the events of March 27 were motivated by a desire—in the March 27

press release issued by the Ministry of Finance—to have 'a direct conversation with the people of Ontario.'" That's a quote from the press release.

"To the extent that they imply that parliamentary institutions and processes in Ontario tend to interfere with the government's message to the public, such statements tend to reflect adversely on those institutions and processes. If the government has a problem with those institutions and processes, or if it wants to improve them, why did it not ask the House sometime during the last session to reflect on the problem and to consider appropriate changes? Traditional ways to do just that would be to introduce a bill, table a notice of motion, enter into discussions at the level of the House leaders, or ask the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly to study and report on the problem. Given the public's reaction to the government's decision to stage a budget presentation outside the House, I think Ontarians are rather fond of their traditional parliamentary institutions and parliamentary processes, and they want greater deference to be shown towards the traditional parliamentary forum in which public policies are proposed, debated and voted on.

"When the government or any member claims that a budget presentation is needed outside the House well before it happens inside the House in order to communicate directly with the people or because of a perceived flaw in the parliamentary institution, there is a danger that the representative role of each and every member of this House is undermined, that respect for the institution is diminished, and that Parliament is rendered irrelevant. Parliamentary democracy is not vindicated by the government conducting a generally one-sided public relations event on the budget well in advance of members having an opportunity to hold the government to account for the budget in this chamber.

"I can well appreciate that parliamentary proceedings can be animated and often emotional, and they can be cumbersome. It may not be the most efficient of political systems, but it is a process that reflects the reality that members, like the people of Ontario, may not be of one mind on matters of public policy. A mature parliamentary democracy is not a docile ... or one-way communications vehicle; it is a dynamic, interactive and representative institution that allows the government of the day to propose and defend its policies—financial and otherwise. It also allows the opposition to scrutinize and hold the government to account for those policies. It is an open, working and relevant system of scrutiny and accountability. If any members of this House have a problem with the concept of parliamentary democracy, then they have some serious explaining to do."

The Speaker went on to ask several questions which prompted him to permit this debate to take place in the House today. This is part of a pattern, I say to members of the government, a pattern that government members themselves should be trying to arrest, whether they be in cabinet or whether they be members of the so-called backbench. In my view, there is no such thing as a



backbench. All members should not look forward to their time in cabinet and place themselves in favour with the Premier by making speeches which are defending the indefensible, but rather they should be defending this particular institution.

Let me say what is happening out there to ignore this institution, to ignore the democratic processes. We have an unprecedented orgy, is the word we have to use, of government advertising.

My friend the opposition House leader, Mr Duncan, handed me this week's Maclean's magazine: a 30-page, expensive, glossy supplement extolling the virtues of the policies of the government of Ontario. I've never seen anything like it. What is going on right now is unacceptable. I will not say, as many in this House have said, that other governments have not advertised; they have. But I have not seen it to this degree, and that is an abuse of the public process.

Coming in this morning, I was listening to my local radio station. They were advertising upcoming advertising, if you can believe that. It was advertising for Super-Build that said: "Open the St Catharines Standard on Wednesday and there will be an advertisement on Super-Build." This is out of control, I say to government members. Go to the Premier, go to the whiz kids, put a stop to this nonsense that every time you turn on the television set you have yet another taxpayer-paid, blatantly partisan government commercial.

If the Progressive Conservative Party wishes to pay for them, I have no objection, because that is their message to put out. But when the taxpayers of this province are asked to pay for clearly partisan advertising on radio, on television, in newspapers and magazines, in pamphlets, on huge signs on the side of the highway with the Premier's name on them where there's not even construction taking place, that is unacceptable to the majority of the people in this province, including many of the people who support this government who I know have mentioned this to me, and they support this. The degree of abuse of office by your government is unprecedented. I've never seen anything like it.

What have you done for this parliamentary institution? You've changed the rules; you've gutted the rules of this House so that the scrutiny of the opposition is not as strong as it used to be. The opposition cannot force the government now to have hearings around the province on its bills. I remember my good friend the Attorney General of this province making an impassioned speech in this House, with which I was in agreement, about the role the opposition has to play in holding the government to account. He was right then, and his words are right today. But what have you done? You have changed the rules of this Legislature to grease the skids for this government to push its legislation through. Often, when you shove it through too quickly and without the proper debate, that's when mistakes are made.

I note as well some of the other things you have done. You have changed the Election Finances Act to allow political parties to spend more money, to exempt certain

expenses during the campaign, such as the leader's tour and polling. You've allowed people to donate more money to political parties, moving in a direction that has money playing a greater, instead of a lesser, influence. I know there are some members on the government side who aren't happy with that as well, who don't rely, and don't want to rely, on those kinds of donations and to have very expensive campaigns, but that's what you have done. You have changed the Election Act to make it a shorter period of time, so that money and advertising play an even greater role, and those who are in the field, the door-to-door people who conduct the traditional campaigns, are placed at a disadvantage. You have a voters' list that leaves many people out of the process. You have, in addition to this—

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Certainly there were many points of order while our member, Mr O'Toole, was speaking. When I look at this debate, it's a significant debate, because what we have here is a situation where there is, quite frankly, no precedent. What was put before you, sir, was a situation where the institution was being challenged and—

**The Speaker:** If the member can't get to the point of order, which he can't—the member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** The picture I'm painting for the member is all the abuses of the democratic process that I see taking place in this province.

I know that's not something most people other than political scientists normally worry about; I understand that. But one of the judgments you make on a government is what they do when they think nobody is watching. You have been able to get away, to this point in time—you raised the issue of government advertising—because there hasn't been much coverage of it. There really hasn't been. You would've gotten away with the budget outside of the House if the news media hadn't decided that this was an affront to democracy.

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You have to judge governments on that basis, because sometimes the media, the public, or even political observers aren't watching. You have to do what's right when that happens, not simply when you think you're under scrutiny or under pressure.

This is an important debate in this House. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke did not present a motion which was inflammatory. He did not present a motion which was highly condemning of the government. He put forward a very clear motion which simply asked that this Legislature receive the budget of the province of Ontario before it goes out into an auto plant training centre.

I think there are people in the Conservative benches who agree with the ruling of the Speaker. I think there are people on the government benches who agree with what some of us have said, but more importantly, people like Michael Bliss. Michael Bliss has real Conservative credentials. He doesn't often say critical things about this government. When he came to the conclusion that he had been insulted by what the government had done, it was exceedingly important in that particular stage.



I have his comments, and he concluded by saying this: "Well, perhaps we old fogies, like the Legislature itself, just don't matter any more. Go ahead and ignore us, Messrs Runciman and Eves. We'll ignore you too. After that Sunday morning phone call, your party is not going to get any of my money. And after you pull your tawdry little budget stunt, don't bother sending anyone around to my door asking for my vote.

"So long as the Progressive Conservative government continues to be an insult to the intelligence of Ontarians, my election day plan is to sit on my patio, read a book, and eat an orange."

That's Michael Bliss, who has not been a person who has been critical of Conservatives over the years.

I want to conclude with an observation about the Speaker by Jim Coyle. It ends as follows: "As Carr knows, those who don't play the game pay a price. The same 'they' now have him in their crosshairs. But happily for the Speaker, for MPPs, and for the public they serve, he's got nothing to lose.

"In the interests of full disclosure, I should say that some years ago, while toiling in the vineyard of the Queen's Park press gallery, I played a little shinny against Gary Carr. As I recall, I couldn't put anything past him. But no worries. Neither, it seems, can the Premier."

**Mr Duncan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: A little incident occurred that you may not be aware of. Our phones began ringing during the Conservative member for Durham's speech. People called to report that an obscene gesture was given by the member that was caught on camera and seen throughout the province. I rise to inform you that at 4:30, when the master tape is available, we will have a look at that. Two of our members observed it. We will have a look at that tape. We can't determine who it was directed at, whether it was directed at yourself, the opposition or another member, but there could be, in our view, a grave disorder if in fact that has been captured on tape.

**The Speaker:** Before we continue, if any member has inadvertently done something, at any time they can stand and apologize. I'm sure we are all honourable members in this House and would do so if in fact we did. Obviously if an occurrence happens like that, our table staff and our friends who actually run the TV will be able to provide that.

**Mr Kormos:** I observed the gesture. I presumed it was directed to me. I believe that, notwithstanding my criticism of him, the member thought I was still number one. I have no concerns whatsoever. I expect no more and, quite frankly, no less from that member.

**Mr O'Toole:** I sincerely withdraw any offence I gave to any member. It will not happen again.

**The Speaker:** I thank the member for that. Now in the rotation, the member for Timmins-James Bay.

**Mr Bisson:** Before I begin, I'd just like to make an amendment to the original motion—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** I notice you're conferring.

**The Speaker:** The member for Timmins-James Bay may continue. Sorry for the interruption.

**Mr Bisson:** I would like to move an amendment to the motion. That's why I was trying to—I noticed you were conferring with someone.

I have an amendment to the original motion, that the motion be amended by adding the following thereto: "and not to present the budget in this way constitutes a clear contempt of the House."

I want to start my 20-minute rotation as the whip for the New Democratic Party with the comments that you made in regard to your decision of last Thursday. I take these comments quite seriously, because I see what happened in this House last Thursday as being one of the only times that I can recall in the 13 years that I've been here that a government has been found to be totally not respectful of the institution that we have here.

Mind you, this government has had contempt motions against it before, and we can go to that, but I took your comments very seriously. You started off by saying, on page 234 of the Hansard of last Thursday, May 8th, "I have a lingering unease about the road we are going down, and my sense is that the House and the general public have the same unease." Then you go on to say that, if left unchallenged, this "incident will embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes."

That's really what this is all about, Mr Speaker. I agree with you, as a member of this Legislature now for my third term, some 13 years. I believe the path we are taking now by way of the actions of this government and what we're dealing with in the House today is most serious because it speaks to the most basic, fundamental rights that we have as legislators here at Queen's Park and as we do across the Commonwealth in any parliamentary democracy. That is that this House is charged with the ability not only to conduct and make decisions by way of votes that government may bring before us by way of bills or motions, of private members or opposition parties—but one of the most fundamental things that we deal with is the budget: how we spend money in the province in Ontario. That's one of the most basic, fundamental rights I believe that we have as legislators. When it comes to making the province work, how we collect taxes and how we spend those tax dollars are among the most basic, fundamental responsibilities we have as legislators.

When this government chose—not because the opposition was blocking them from being able to bring a budget forward, as happened when the David Peterson government was in place—to go outside of Parliament in order to sell their budget because, in their own words, they find that Parliament is a hindrance to them getting their message out, so therefore they're going to circumnavigate the Parliament and take the budget outside of the sight of Parliament to do it against some stage-managed backdrop, I think that is really taking a step down a road that this current and future legislatures don't want to go down. It really says that this Parliament is



brought down to mere irrelevance when it comes to what we do as our work.

As you went through your ruling, Mr Speaker, I thought as I listened to it that it was quite balanced. You went through the various stages, and said at the end that in fact you thought this was one of the most basic issues that we had to deal with. I couldn't agree with you more.

1450

The handlers came to Ernie Eves and said, "Listen, we've got this great idea. We're going to take the budget outside the House. We're going to put it out with Magna International as the backdrop. We're going to have our own invited guests come in. We're going to have commercials in the middle of it. We're going to sell this budget, wham, bam, thank you, Sam. No opposition there to pester us with any negative comment." I have to ask myself a question: where was Ernie Eves when that was being thought of as a strategy? Either it was a strategy that was made by Ernie Eves and then delivered by his campaign team or it was his campaign team and the people in the Premier's office who came up with the idea and brought it to the Premier. In either event, where was Ernie Eves, the Premier of Ontario, in that decision?

I know where I would have been if I had been Premier of Ontario and my handlers came to me and said, "Gilles, you're 20 points back in the polls." I remember that. We were in government in 1995. We were about 20 points back. I remember it well. If all of a sudden they came to me and said, "I've got a surefire idea to boost you up in the polls; we're going to do the budget outside the House," not in a million years would I have accepted that advice. I can't believe that any members of the House who have been here for any time would have been able to accept that argument. Quite frankly, they would have said, "Hey, go away with that. We'll have some stage-managed events after we read the budget in the House. Let's do things to promote it once we've read the budget in the House, but at no time should we try to circumvent Parliament in bringing the budget forward."

It brings into question, in my view, the leadership of Ernie Eves. I hate to say that because quite frankly—and I want to put it on the record—I have respect for Ernie Eves, both as our Premier and as a person. I've served in this Legislature with him dating back to 1990. I know that when Ernie was in opposition, he was a decent person to deal with, as he is a decent person to deal with now as Premier of Ontario. But I have to ask myself this question: where was his judgment in allowing this decision to go forward?

One of the issues here that I think we have to reflect on is not only the larger issue that we're going to have to vote on this motion by the end of the debate, probably tomorrow some time, to decide where we go as a House, because you have charged us with that decision, but I have to ask myself, where was Ernie Eves in regard to his leadership on this issue? I'm hoping Mr Eves comes into the House today and tells us what his views are on this now that he's had a chance to see this unfold Thursday and over the weekend.

I am imploring Mr Eves to do something that's very simple: to come into the House and say, "You know what? We tried to do something we thought was smart. We tried to do something we thought was right. We didn't feel we did anything wrong, but I'm sorry." If the Premier of Ontario were to have come into the House on Thursday or over the weekend—even today might not be too late—and finally said, "We did wrong and we're sorry," and move on, I think a lot of Ontarians would have understood it. They would have said, "Yeah, they messed up, but at least they're willing to fess up to the mistake they've made."

I'm looking forward to seeing if the Premier is actually going to come into the House—because I noticed he was here earlier—to say exactly that, because for him not to do so really goes to the root of what the issue is here, and that is that this government, in my view, is not only in contempt of this House but, quite frankly, is in contempt of the population of Ontario when it comes to the democracy they are charged with as a majority government to uphold. We can't forget this government got elected by more people than individually the Liberals or the New Democrats, and they were given a majority. It's a wonderful thing for a government to be able to say they got a majority in this House, but I believe with that comes a responsibility, and that responsibility is to govern in a way that respects the people of Ontario through their institutions.

I think this government has demonstrated on too many occasions that when it comes to respect for the institution of democracy we have in this Parliament, they've tried to thumb their nose at it to a certain extent. I look back to the debates we've had in this House in regard to rule changes. We have got to the point where the opposition parties have been stripped of many of the tools we had to hold the government accountable. Why did the government do that? Because the government said, "Oh, the opposition is always holding up the government. Whenever the government wants to do something, the opposition goes into filibusters and stops everything." No, that wasn't the case. We used the rules on the change of the megacity. Yes, our caucus, the NDP caucus under the leadership of Howard Hampton, decided that we were going to use the rules to their fullest to try to stop the merger of the city of Toronto and others into what is now called the big megacity because the government never ran on that as a platform item—it was not inside their Common Sense Revolution—and we thought it was wrong that people had not been consulted, and there was a referendum in Toronto by which a majority of Torontonians across this great city said they didn't want to be amalgamated. So yes, we used the full extent of the rules to be able to slow you down.

But the government, when they felt frustrated by the process, came back with the biggest hammer they could find and they basically knocked the opposition down below the floor, to the point that we have very little in the way of rules to be able to hold this government accountable. I put to you that yes, at the end of the day, a gov-



ernment has to have the right to pass its legislation. I won't argue that for one second on either side of the House. I may not like a law that you want to bring forward, but the opposition has a role and a responsibility to scrutinize that legislation and yes, where the legislation is controversial, to slow debate down in order to be able to have a fuller debate about what the issues are. If that's messy for the government, too bad; that's democracy.

Do we want to be ruled in a land where a government decides by way of who sits in the corner office at the Premier's office that you can do what you want, when you want, without scrutiny? I thought we fought wars against that. Thousands and thousands of people died to give us the right to participate in this democracy. That just doesn't mean at the ballot box to exercise my democratic franchise to vote, but when elected, to be able to utilize the rules of the House to hold the government to account and to be able to scrutinize them.

At the end of the day, I accept as an opposition member that the government will do what it has to do because the people have given them a majority. I can go into a whole debate about how we elect governments and that we should move to proportional representation—in fact, it's inside our Public Power book, and I ask people to take a look at [publicpower.ca](http://publicpower.ca)—but this is not what I want to talk about today.

I just want to try to get the government to understand that you're going to have one heck of a serious decision to make tomorrow or the day after, when we bring this to a vote, and that is, do you want to be seen as a government that yet again, by your majority, is going to vote in opposition to this motion to give you even more rights than you have already; to be able to move outside of this Legislature with whatever communication exercise you may have because you find the Legislature to be cumbersome, you find it to be a debating place, you find it to be a place where you may get some criticism?

I say to the government, be careful. If I believe the polls, those of you whom are coming back are going to be sitting on this side of the House. There's a very good chance of that.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Don't believe it.

**Mr Bisson:** You see, there's the problem. The Conservative member says, "Don't believe it. We'll be back as government." Well, I say to you across the way, you still don't get it. You're not only holding this House in contempt by saying that; you're holding in contempt the people of Ontario. Let them decide if they want to give you a majority or if they want to throw you out of office. I'm just saying—I don't have a crystal ball to read what's going to happen in the next election—if I'm to believe the polls, there's a very strong likelihood that you will be sitting on this side of the House if you're re-elected. My point is, you're going to have to live with the rules that you have made—unless we form the government, because we're going to change some rules to try to bring some democracy back. I don't believe that a Liberal majority would actually change rules, which is a whole

other debate—but you're going to have to live with not only that, but the decision that you make here tomorrow vis-à-vis this particular contempt, the vote that we'll have in regard to your contempt against the House.

So I say to the government members, be wary. This is a very serious thing that the Speaker is asking us to debate today and to be able to decide how we want to proceed. I believe all of us want to proceed in a way that's best for Ontarians, and that is to make sure that at the end of the day, yes, a government has the right to do what it has to do by right of its majority, but it cannot use that majority to the point of being seen as tyrannical.

There's the old saying that the parliamentary democracy that we have today in the British Commonwealth is really a tyranny of the majority, and I don't believe that you want to be seen that way. I have to believe that as human beings you're no different than me. You may have a different philosophical view on things and a different ideology in politics as a political view, but I believe that we're all honourable members and we're all here for the same reason: to serve our constituents and the people of Ontario to the best of our ability. I don't believe we can really accomplish that by diminishing how this House works. So that's the point I wanted to make.

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The other thing that really surprised me on Thursday was, not only did the government decide not to say that they were sorry, but that they were actually bold in their defence of why they did nothing wrong. I find that quite worrisome. I listened to the comments of the Solicitor General, who's the top cop in Ontario, I listened to the comments of the government House leader and I listened to the comments of various backbenchers as they ran out of the House and were scrummed. They were pointing the finger at the Speaker being wrong and were not willing to accept that they did wrong themselves. The biggest mark of an individual's maturity, in my view, is to admit if you've done something wrong and move on. I hearken back to President Kennedy, when he came to office in 1961. He went ahead with the Bay of Pigs fiasco, which was started under the Eisenhower administration. He finally gave the go-ahead, as President of the day, to carry on with the plans that President Eisenhower had put in place to invade Cuba by way of the Bay of Pigs. At the end of the day we all know it was a real fiasco, but what was remarkable about that process was that President Kennedy came back and said, "I accept responsibility. Never mind that it was Eisenhower who started it; I gave the final go-ahead and I accept the responsibility. I was wrong." The people of the United States, and I would argue most of the free world, looked at President Kennedy and said, "Well, there's a different politician. There's somebody who's willing to admit that they're wrong. What a fresh idea." I put forward to members of the Tory government, why not try to do something a little bit bold here? Admit that you were wrong and be able to get away.

The other argument the government House leader puts forward is that if we accept the argument of the motion



before us, that the government would be handcuffed and would never be able to go forward and make such announcements—I'm just going back to Hansard. For example, he says that if the ruling were in place, the government would be paralyzed. The government would not be able to do such a thing as to announce the building of a \$200-million hospital somewhere in Ontario; if the government tried to respond to something like the SARS epidemic, they would not be able to do anything because they'd have to come back to the House first. Poppycock. Don't be silly. People understand that governments have the power to announce expenditures, that governments have the right to enact policy, that governments have the right to respond to emergencies by way of legislation that they have as a cabinet. The issue is that we as a Parliament have the ultimate right to be given that budget first so that at the end of the day, when we make our decisions of how to get taxpayers' money and spend it, it is a function that is done here by Parliament itself.

Je dis dans les deux minutes qui me restent que le gouvernement a eu une chance : ils ont essayé de faire quelque chose qui est vu, à la fin de la journée, comme mépris contre la Chambre, et ce gouvernement, par ses actions jusqu'à date, démontre qu'ils ne sont pas préparés à dire : « On prend un pas en arrière, on réfléchit et on admet qu'on a fait quelque chose de mal », ni à dire à la population ontarienne, « Excusez-nous », et puis d'aller en avant avec ce qui est le plus important à cette Assemblée : le restant des débats dont on a besoin d'avoir ici, et d'être vraiment capable de traiter les questions d'importance pour cette Assemblée. Si un gouvernement dit qu'ils veulent avoir l'autorité de sortir de l'Assemblée pour être capables de faire un débat aussi important et aussi central au rôle des parlementaires dans un parlement comme le nôtre, d'amener un budget hors de l'Assemblée parce qu'ils n'aiment pas que l'opposition va s'opposer possiblement à ce qui est contenu dans le budget, cela me dit qu'il leur manque le respect non seulement pour les députés de cette Chambre, pour l'institution législative et pour le Président, mais pour la population ontarienne en général.

Je prends très au sérieux la tâche que vous nous avez donnée. Vous nous avez demandé de réfléchir, d'avoir un débat sur où on va aller avec cette question-là, et je demande au gouvernement de finalement réaliser qu'ils ont mal fait quelque chose et de le dire : « On a mal fait », et d'aller en avant et ne pas voter contre cette motion.

**The Speaker:** Further debate.

**Hon Mr Clark:** I spent the better part of the weekend reflecting on what I was going to talk about when I had an opportunity today. I want to say from the get-go, sir, that I actually was asked by the media whether your decision was the right decision. I said, "Only the Speaker can answer that question." Quite literally, if he believes in his heart that it was the right decision, then it was the right decision, and it's not for me or any member of this House to judge that decision. As a matter of fact, the standing orders probably state that more eloquently than I

can. The standing orders very clearly state that when the Speaker makes a decision, the decision is not debatable, and that is what has occurred here. The Speaker made a decision, and then he asked for a motion to be debated. That's where we are today. But with respect to my colleagues in the House, I think it would be incumbent upon me to perhaps explain what I was reflecting on on the weekend and how we came to be where we are in this particular debate.

When it was first considered and brought to my attention that we were talking about doing this innovative process, I asked about the standing orders, I asked about privileges and I asked whether anything we were about to contemplate would be in breach of the privileges or the standing orders. These standing orders are like the Bible here. They are like the law. This is what we have to go by.

We looked into it, and as a matter of fact the Speaker actually used one of the precedents in his own decision, where Speaker Turner stated: "Budget secrecy is a political convention as is the practice that the Treasurer presents his budget in the House before discussing it in any other public forum. It has nothing to do with parliamentary privilege.

"As I stated in my ruling of February 1, 1983, 'although it is a courtesy to the assembly for a minister to release information in the assembly before releasing it ... to the public, it is not a breach of the privileges or rules of the assembly if this does not happen.'"

We found ourselves in a perplexing situation shortly after we announced this and heard the comments from the Speaker and the opposition. We had rules that stated there was no reason why we couldn't do what we had decided to do, but we find ourselves in a situation where the Speaker has made his decision and as a result we are now here.

The standing orders themselves are filled with rules of decorum. At one point today, sir, I was laughing and, ironically, at the same time saddened. We're talking about contempt of the House, and as members opposite were talking about contempt of members; we saw decorum sink, once again, to one of the low points in this place. We saw members heckling—and let those without sin cast the first stone. I'm not without sin; I have heckled. My colleagues across the way, just before Christmas—we actually had an interesting round when the Speaker had left. Even the Speaker can recall that. We talked about it afterwards and we're still friends. That's what this place is about, though. We're supposed to debate policies and issues, not personalities.

I went through the standing orders over the weekend, and I was really quite taken that there are a number of issues in here that state we are not to make allegations against another member; we're not to impute false or unavowed motives to another member; we're not to make charges against a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood; we're not to use abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder, and I would argue that sign language would probably be in there too, Speaker.



I'm not sure whether sign language was there when this was originally written, but clearly it would be today. These rules are about trying to maintain decorum, and the Speaker's role is maintaining decorum and being the referee for the standing orders. That's what it's about.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Sign language? We call it giving somebody the finger.

**Hon Mr Clark:** Well, you just did that, and I'm sure you just did it as an example. I just point out that's not what we should be doing in this place.

As I was listening to the debate here, I was listening to comments—and the worst thing that happens in this place is that every so often we take ourselves up to the pedestal where we rise above our colleagues on the opposite side. Probably the opposition do it to this side more often than on the other side. Once the government is here, they don't do it on the other side. But this morning when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking, he talked about cynicism. We've heard the member from St Catharines use the term "abuse of power." The cynicism and abuses of power of which they speak, if they're true, come from how we all act here in this building.

1510

Let me make a point. On December 5, I believe, the House leader for the opposition rose on a point of privilege, and your decision was made, Mr Speaker, on December 5, 2000, so I'm assuming this was probably done on the Thursday previous to that. He stated, "Instead of reliable account information, I found partisan political propaganda, propaganda which should not be funded by my constituents or other taxpayers." Then he went on, "Each of them contained blatant partisan attacks on my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and Liberal colleagues." One government Web page highlights that. So he lays out his point of privilege before the House and then the Speaker rules. One of the Speaker's statements is, "A line is crossed when a government uses a Web site or, for that matter, any publicly funded mechanism as a vehicle to launch a provocative attack on any member of this House."

When you live in a glass house, don't throw stones.

I have here in my hand three letters from the leader of the loyal opposition. These are letters on Legislative Assembly letterhead. One is dated June 12, 2001; one is dated January 8, 2002; one is dated January 22, 2003. It has Legislative Assembly phone numbers to room 381. These are clearly on Legislative Assembly letterhead. On the bottom of the page it says [www.Ontarioliberal.com](http://www.Ontarioliberal.com). These letterheads were paid for by taxpayers. On the bottom of the page it has [www.Ontarioliberal.com](http://www.Ontarioliberal.com).

If one goes to that Web page, one will find rather provocative statements—

**Interjection:** Partisan?

**Hon Mr Clark:** —partisan—of the government.

The fascinating thing is that the opposition rose in this place on a point of privilege.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** We have their attention now because this is where the decorum is lost. They don't like what

I'm saying so they begin to heckle. I'm used to it. That's what tends to happen around here.

But, Mr Speaker, the statement in here says, and it was from you, sir, "A line is crossed when a government uses a Web site or, for that matter, any publicly funded mechanism as a vehicle to launch a provocative attack on any member of this House." That is the line from the Speaker. Yet for three years the leader of the loyal opposition has been using letterhead paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, clearly on the bottom indicating [www.Ontarioliberal.com](http://www.Ontarioliberal.com), clearly partisan, clearly political, with very clear, provocative messaging in it.

One would think that if one was to go after the government on a provocative, allegedly partisan basis, one would make sure—as my grandfather used to teach me, "Make sure your backyard is clean before you look at others."

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** That is so rich.

**Hon Mr Clark:** The member opposite says, "That is so rich." I would ask the member opposite, if this was my letterhead as Minister of Labour and on the bottom it had [www.pcontario](http://www.pcontario), what would be the outcry in this place? I ask the members of the third party, what would you say if we had that on our government letterhead?

**Ms Churley:** I wouldn't give you the finger.

**Hon Mr Clark:** I appreciate that. The member says she wouldn't give me the finger. But you would raise the concern, because we all would recognize that it's a point of privilege. We would all recognize that, lo and behold, ladies and gentlemen, for people to stand on a pedestal and point fingers about partisan advertising, and yet three years they continue using the leader of the loyal opposition and publicly advertise a partisan Web page on his letterhead—if that is not an abuse of power, I don't know what is. If a government member was to do that, there would be an apocalyptic cloud that would rush across Toronto and all of Ontario would come to a grinding halt, with people screaming and yelling, "Cynicism."

I have found it—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** Well, I may have to raise this as a point of privilege, but I know, as the Speaker knows, that we are sitting in an interesting opportunity right now in that we're debating a motion that came about from a contempt ruling by the Speaker. So I can't bring forth this point of privilege at this time, but we may work on it and bring it out further. We may have that debate in here yet.

But do you know what? I think it's important for honourable members of this House to be asking, is this an appropriate use of taxpayer money? Did the Leader of the Opposition use taxpayer money appropriately? No. I would argue that he has not. Some of the people in my riding would be using terminology right now that would probably begin with an "H" and end with a "Y," but I won't do that because I'm an honourable member and it is unparliamentary for me to use that terminology in this place. But it is something we will have ample time to debate. I would ask members to check around their offices in their constituencies and see how many of these

letters have gone out. How many times has the leader advertised his Web page for his party at taxpayer expense?

**Ms Churley:** Do you mean “hypocrisy”?

**Hon Mr Clark:** I heard the word, but I’m not going to use it.

Mr Speaker, we’re here today, as I stated earlier, and you have made a decision, a *prima facie* case in terms of contempt. But we’re actually here today debating a motion. We can’t really talk about the Speaker’s decision, but we can talk about the motion. That’s what we’re here for.

The motion reads that this Legislative Assembly has the undisputed right, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario. This is fascinating. How could anyone in this House oppose this? It is a clear motherhood statement. How could anyone in this House, as a parliamentarian, oppose this? But I think it’s important for the audience at home to know that we understand the strategy which is before us. We’re not naive. You see, if the government members stand and oppose this, there will be a hue and cry from the opposition: “How can they possibly do it?” We have already heard the House leader over there say, “How could they oppose this motion? It’s a simple motion. It’s an easy motion.”

We raised points about the validity of the motion and issues in terms of lock-up for the press. They don’t want to hear about that. It’s a simple motherhood statement. I know the third party has offered an amendment to it, which will also be considered now. So if we don’t support this, there will be hue and cry. But if we support this and it passes unanimously in this place, then I would dare say you will have Liberal members rising in the House and saying, “But this motion came from a *prima facie* case of contempt. Therefore, this was a motion of non-confidence.” “They’ve lost confidence in their own government,” they will say. They will stand up with headlines and say, “See? They agree with us. They’ve lost the confidence of their own government.” “The government must fall,” Mr Smitherman will squeal in delight. So we are now caught in this interesting box.

Only Mr Conway could come up with such an interesting strategy, because he has been there before. I dare say that when he leaves, that caucus will have a huge vacuum to fill, a huge void, because he has a great deal of history.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** Again we have the partisan heckling. You just kind of put it in one ear and out the other.

Here is the conundrum: if the government supports the motion, they will allege that there has been a loss of confidence in the government, so they should be dissolving the House. They will make that statement loud; I will prophesy that’s what they will do. If we defeat it, then they’ll attack us, saying we’re not parliamentary. “How dare you defeat it?”

**Ms Churley:** You’re not listening to the people.

**Hon Mr Clark:** “You’re not listening to the people,” they’ll say. So the government members find themselves in an awkward box because of the motion—

*Interjections.*

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**Hon Mr Clark:** I’m admitting it. I looked at this motion all weekend long and I looked at the precedents.

*Laughter.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** You may find this fascinatingly funny, but I don’t. This is a parliamentary House, and I happen to respect it. And that’s why, when we respect it, we actually look to the rulings—these things. It’s interesting to note that we did not breach these things. We did not breach the standing orders. We did not breach members’ privileges. So we find ourselves in this interesting box now.

Here we are, debating a motion. The member has put forth this motion in a very clear way, trying to make it very simple. But we are caught. What is the expression? “Damned if you do, damned if you don’t.” There you go. Damned if you do, damned if you don’t.

As I was reflecting on the weekend and as I pulled through all my files in my office at home, I came across these fascinating letters from the leader of the loyal opposition. I couldn’t but remark and comment on the irony of it all, that here we are, while they stand here yelling, “Contempt,” “Abuse of power,” “Abuse of privilege,” “Arrogance,” “Abuse of the taxpayer,” while they raise points of partisan advertising, at the same time they knowingly, deliberately printed letterhead for three years promoting their political party on Legislative Assembly letterhead for the leader of the loyal opposition. For three years—how many letters could have gone out?

**Interjection:** Thousands.

**Hon Mr Clark:** Thousands.

**Mr Bisson:** Just like Jean Chrétien.

**Hon Mr Clark:** Jean Chrétien—I don’t want to go there. We’re dealing with this House here. Amazing.

I was out canvassing and talking to my neighbours, and I asked them what they would think of the leader of the loyal opposition if they found out that he was using taxpayer money to promote his own partisan party on Legislative Assembly letterhead. They said, “Obscene.” They also stated, “Isn’t it ironic that if it was the Premier’s letterhead, there would be an explosion in this House like no one has ever seen before? They would be out there in the scrum, yelling, screaming, stamping their feet, calling for their Premier to resign. They would be saying, ‘How dare he use taxpayer money in this manner?’”

But, lo and behold, it is OK for the leader of the loyal opposition for three years to be using taxpayer money to promote his own partisan party at the expense of the taxpayer.

So the diplomatic terminology, Mr Speaker, would be “irony.” You and I both know the terminology that would be unparliamentary. I won’t go there, because this place is a parliamentary House and we’re supposed to be above that.

As I was preparing for this, I could not think back about anything but the statement, “Don’t criticize other people’s backyards until you’ve checked out your own.”



What is it in the Bible? "Don't go plucking the log out of someone's eye until you take the splinter out of your own." Fascinating. Fascinating that as we here today debate an issue which is very clearly a vitally important issue for this Parliament in terms of how we proceed—and I don't know what the outcome will be because of the way the motion was drafted. There may be amendments to it. I don't know. We may need to make clarifications so that we understand very clearly whether or not this is a vote of confidence or not for this House. I don't know. Those things are yet to be determined, but I do say I find it rich, I find it somewhat less than humorous that these members have risen in their place in a very dignified way, thumped their chests, screaming at the government side, while willingly and knowingly committing very similar acts that they allege the government to have committed. It is shameful, it is reprehensible, it is appalling that the leader of the loyal opposition would use taxpayer money to promote a partisan Web page with very clear, provocative messaging that is anti-government and pro his own organization.

We wouldn't mind so much if they actually had dollar figures in their economic statement, but they're lacking too.

So therein is where we sit, Mr Speaker. I can't tell you how I'll vote on the motion. We'll have to wait and see how it's amended, any number of ways. But I've raised my concerns for this House. I thank you for your consideration today.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** Let me commence by commending you, Mr Speaker, on the manner in which you have carried out your duties. There's no doubt that your decision took a lot of thought and reflection, one of the most important decisions made by the Speaker of this House since my time here, 18 years now, since 1985.

Your decision comes at a time when many people in our society are questioning the process, that it's not perfect, but a process that we have had great respect for. That process is democracy. It's not a perfect tool for governing, but we don't know any other way. But, again, we have all come over the years, hundreds of years, to respect that process. What that process has done is to allow participation, engagement, involvement and a kind of ownership of one's life, an ownership of one's destiny. We came to respect that. Your decision, I'm sure, as you reflected on it, must have got you going back very, very deep into your thoughts to say in what direction you must go. But I know the kind of individual that you are, that as an honourable man, you made the right decision.

Your ruling was not only significant, it was very sage. It was sage because it reminds us that Ontario is a parliamentary democracy, based on the idea that Parliament is supreme and sovereign.

Let me also, at this time, commend my colleague, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, for his excellent presentation and his motion, which we are addressing today. My Conway reminded us of the importance of this place, the importance of Parliament. The

motion reads as though somehow we have listened to many other members of this House speak on different issues. Let us focus ourselves on what the motion states. The motion reads like this: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

My colleague, the previous speaker, just mentioned that he's caught. He's damned if he does, he's damned if he doesn't. He said, "How could one not vote for this? It is the right thing to do because of the respect for Parliament and the respect for the process. It's the democratic thing to do."

I want to say to my colleague—who, of course, will leave this place physically, but his spirit and his work that he has done here will remind us. I've actually asked my staff to get a copy of his presentation—Mr Conway's, that is—to send it to all the schools, because it will remind us of what the historic nature of Parliament is about and what the historic nature of democracy is about. I think that they will then say to themselves, "If this could proceed like that, we do live in a wonderful country. We do live in a wonderful world."

Let me talk also and make comment about my colleagues whom I've met over 18 years here, the kinds of individuals they are. They are all honourable people. I've never worked with such wonderful people in my career. They're dedicated, hard-working, opinionated, and they bring their issues here. But they represent the most important thing in our country and our province: they represent millions of people out in Ontario who have sent them here to speak on their behalf, on the people's behalf, to express their concerns, frustrations and joy, in this one arena called Parliament.

1530

They ask also that when you do collect their money, their taxes, you spend it wisely and debate to make sure it is examined in a way that we make sure each individual in our society is looked after, especially the most vulnerable. If it's not done in that manner, there may be some concern: "How was that debated? How was that presented? Was my case heard? Are those who are homeless looked after? Are those who are sick and lame looked after? Are those who are now seniors looked after?"

We like to make sure that is done, and the only way we can sanely do that is to make a representative of all of us come here and present that issue, the collection of that money called the budget: "Here is what we collected. Here is how we're going to spend it. Is it OK? What have we omitted?" In other words, we examine that process.

I have great faith in my colleagues here, who will do that. Of course we have guidance from the table. There is a structure to follow, because sometimes we do get off on tangents. There's a procedure to follow, and you are there, sir, to follow that and to make sure it's followed. When that is violated, or when we get too creative, in a way that avoids the procedure, you remind us.

That is why my colleague Mr Conway brought this forward: to say that we have violated that right. It goes to



the core of what we all are about, of what we believe in. Wars have been fought, people killed over this: because we want a democratic state.

Who are we, the citizens of Ontario? Where are we coming from? It is said that Ontarians are one of the most diverse cultures in the world. From all parts of this world, with different languages and different governments, people come from oppressed places and wonderful places, wanting to make a life here. The most important thing for us to do is to encourage them to participate and build confidence in our populace by saying to them, "We will do what you ask us to do, as long as it doesn't infringe on the rights of others. We'll do it in an honourable way." So then we are all honourable men and women who are here today. When we see violation of that, we cringe. That is what's happening. That is what has happened.

Many times when I come into this place as a member of Parliament, I don't forget why I was sent here. I'm sent by the people of Scarborough-Rouge River, to represent them in their wide diversity, those who are sometimes in pain and suffering and sometimes celebrating the joy of what they're doing. Many times one is denied the right to do that; unable to speak in Parliament, unable to even meet in Parliament. It is a long stretch of time from Christmas in December to April, when we can assemble to tell the good news or about the suffering of our people. The denial of meeting—this government has done that.

When we bring that forward, they feel that it's quite all right, it's OK. I felt we were on the wrong road when Mike Harris was elected and stated this. He said, "We are not the government. We are here to fix government."

I was confused about that. You're not the government? He ran to be the government. He got to be the government and said, "I'm not the government; I'm here to fix it. As a matter of fact, I'm not even here to listen."

We saw a lot of confusion, a lot of animosity that went on in our society. Teachers were fighting against the government. The government was fighting against teachers. We saw a lot of unsettled things.

Members of Parliament arrive here and are not able to speak on issues. Debates and closures are done in a draconian manner. Closure is put on the highest percentage of votes and motions in this House. The frustration builds on the representative. It is felt by the populace who elected us, who say, "How did you present yourself?"

"I was unable to do so, because the debates were closed; the House is not meeting."

The government of the day, my honourable friends, sits there and says, "It's not necessary." As a matter of fact, the behaviour is such that it would be much more convenient if there were no people. The government seems to be saying, "We can do a wonderful job without the people. We don't have to ask you anything. We don't have to ask the opposition anything. You are irrelevant."

So the time came for the presentation of the budget, and they said, "If Parliament is irrelevant, if members are irrelevant, we then can make a selection of friends we have in a place to present all the money we're collecting and make an announcement in a shop," an institution that

is outside this place and outside the ears and the comments of those who were elected legally by the people. They said, "That's the way to go."

What really drives me almost to insanity is that they believe they were doing the right thing. When they are told it was the wrong thing to do, they think we have infringed upon their rights as government. But maybe they're right if they think that way, they're right in their own self. They're right because they feel we are irrelevant here, the place is irrelevant, so why not? That's what has happened. Where we've reached today is a very sad time in our democracy.

It's a government that felt that those on welfare could live on less in a tough time, a government that felt that the homeless should be imprisoned—it's a crime to be homeless; that was touted here—a party that felt the institution of Speaker that we set up could be insulted and challenged although it is written that what the Speaker has ruled—as the member for Durham said, challenging the chair, not respecting the authority of Parliament. It is consistent from the beginning when they had no respect for that.

As you may recall, Mr Speaker, I personally was brought to the edge when I was denied even to debate Bill 26, one of the largest omnibus bills this government has brought in. You may recall that I sat in the House and refused to move until we debated that, fighting for the rights of a democratic process that people died for.

This government felt, "No way. We will do what we want." As a matter of fact, I was a bit relieved when they decided to split that omnibus bill in a way that we could debate, and we were fighting to do that. That was no different than the budget now. We have to fight and make sure the budget is read in this House and to make it the regulation of this House that it must not be read anywhere else. The first place it should be done is in this House. The member said, "How simple that is." The previous speaker said, "There's no way I can vote against this, because it makes sense." It doesn't challenge anything. It says, "If you are proud of your budget, bring it forward. Bring it forward here so we can talk about it."

Some wise men said certain things that still stay with us. Aristotle said, "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost." So you become a better government, my friends, if you share your thoughts, because it is government by the people and it must be for the people. As Thomas Jefferson said, "Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government."

1540

What has happened, then? This party, this government, has become irrelevant. They refuse to inform the populace. They refuse to meet. They have run out of ideas, so maybe they get ideas from some other individuals whom they are paying big bucks to say, "This is the way to go," ignoring all of the democratic process.

It's a sad day when we have to debate that, but it may be a good day to remind us of the importance of what



democracy is all about; the importance of the thousands and millions of people from different walks of life who make up Ontario; to encourage them to participate in this process.

If there is any party that tries to do otherwise, then the ultimate price they will pay is when they go to the polls and the people will then make that choice. I hope they don't try, before their time runs out, to maybe change and postpone and cancel elections, because the manner in which they are going, they have cancelled many things: they have cancelled Parliament, they have cancelled debates and maybe they will try to cancel the election. They know that we know the time has come. Time is running out on when the election will be called. I hope the leader of the government—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I'm trying to follow you.

**Mr Curling:** He says he's trying to follow me. Follow me carefully.

In the next election, which will be very soon, the people will look straight at you, and at every one of us, and ask, "Do you deserve the right to my vote so that you can represent me in Parliament, represent my concerns? Will you consult and inform me?" I hope that when they go to the polls they will make that very intelligent decision and make sure they put someone there who will not try to undermine democracy and insult Parliament in a way that we have no voice here.

I want to say that Ontario, this wonderful province of ours, and Canada, this wonderful country of ours, will only be better off as we weed out those who feel that the almighty power lies within them—no consultation, no information shared—and maybe they can find a place to which they can go to present the budget, somewhere else.

This motion, as we come forward—and in winding up, I would like to just read that motion again, because I want us to know exactly what we are debating: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget." An important document, an important direction.

The fact is that the billions of dollars we are spending, collected from the people to be spent on the people, are to be debated by their representatives. They will then feel confident that they can engage themselves in this democracy. They've got to feel a part of it and not feel so excluded, as this government has done over the last eight or nine years by making people feel that they are not in any way Canadians or Ontarians.

I want to say, Mr Speaker, that I have the ultimate respect for your position and your ruling. I think this ruling comes at a time when we can all examine ourselves: what is our purpose here and do we want to continue in this job? I want to. I'd like to come here, to continue to represent the people of Scarborough-Rouge River, every single one, regardless of colour, class, creed, party stripe or religion. Because the fact is, that is what this is all about, and when we make this place irrelevant, those people have lost the right of what we all have fought for. Thank you very much.

**Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today to talk about the matter that is before the House.

I might add that the debate that is going on in the House today is the same debate that went on in the House beginning on Thursday. I can tell you it's not the debate that's happening today in Scarborough Southwest or indeed across Ontario. This is not what the people of Ontario are talking about today. I can tell you that they're talking about what was in the budget—all of the good news of continued economic prosperity and jobs.

*Laughter.*

**Hon Mr Newman:** Well, the opposition laughs. I know that they seem to be against jobs. We saw what the record of the NDP was in office: a loss of 10,000 jobs to this province. They're obviously a party that does not care about jobs and economic prosperity in our province.

I can tell you that the people of Scarborough Southwest are talking about having a safe and secure community. Last Thursday evening I attended a public meeting over at R.H. King Academy, where almost 200 residents from the area of St Clair Avenue and Danforth Road got together with representatives from the city to talk about a shelter in the area that is currently not operating within the proper zoning that is there and to talk about the ramifications that were happening as a result of that facility being in their community. That's what people are talking about. They're talking about having a safe and secure community.

This past weekend I also had the opportunity to participate in the annual M&M barbecue that took place right across our province. I know many members from all parties would have participated in those barbecues across the province. The one that I attended was in the Kingston Road and Ridgemoor area in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. Hundreds of individuals came out to support that cause. They were not talking about where the budget was held; they were talking more about what was actually in the budget, when would they get that much-needed tax relief.

I can also tell you that last week I had the opportunity to attend the second annual Don Mills Foundation for Seniors Seniors Health Fair at E.P. Taylor Place and Overland Club. When I finished addressing this group of seniors on the issue of health and long-term care in our province, a gentleman came up to me after I spoke and talked about the \$1 million contribution that our government had made to the Juno Beach memorial in France. He was there on D-Day and he wanted to express to me his great satisfaction with the fact that the government had made such a contribution to acknowledge the role that the veterans and seniors had played.

To get directly to the point, to accept the notion that the budget announcement was out of order would set a dangerous precedent here in Ontario. It would quite frankly throw into question any announcement that a government might make, and, I might add, that any government might make. It's a very dangerous road to go

down. For example, if a government wanted to make an announcement of, say, \$80 million for a health facility or a new educational facility in our province, the Speaker would ultimately be asked to rule if this was out of order or not. It would also happen with an announcement of \$1 million or even an announcement of a smaller amount: the Speaker would be asked to make a ruling whether or not that was in order.

So I guess the real question is, where will the line be drawn? At what level can a government make an announcement outside of the House, or can they at all? That's the real question that's being asked of all members here today.

I only have to go back to last July, when I had the privilege of announcing \$100 million in new funding to provide even better nursing and personal care to residents in Ontario's long-term-care facilities. Last July 31, as you'll recall, the House was not sitting, the money was needed and the announcement was made. We had a situation that had to be dealt with. The House was not sitting, the money was needed and the announcement was made. This was, I might add, an unprecedented commitment to long-term care in our province and to the services provided in our long-term-care facilities. I can tell you today that the announcement has gone a long way to improving the level of care that our seniors receive and it has made a real difference right across our great province of Ontario. Now, what if we accepted the opposition motion today? Would this important announcement have been ruled out of order? Could the funding have been flowed to Ontario's long-term-care facilities? Would we have been able to flow those dollars beginning the very next day, on August 1, 2002? That's the very important issue that we're grappling with today with this motion that's been put before the House.

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Now, if announcements like this cannot be made, this would have a negative effect on the way that the business of government is done on behalf of the people of Ontario. When you think about it, what if there was an emergency in the province? What if there was a disaster? How would governments deal with it if they had to come back to the House to debate whether or not an announcement could be made? How would the very important issue of SARS—which has been so ably dealt with by our government, our Premier and our Minister of Health, Tony Clement—have been dealt with? Governments of all political stripes, whoever they are, must have the ability to deal with the concerns of the day on behalf of the people of Ontario, because, after all, that is what they are elected to do.

I say today that this flies in the face of repeated rulings of Speakers that there's nothing out of order when a government makes announcements outside of this place. It's a long-standing way of how business is done for the people of Ontario; it's nothing new. In fact, all three parties in this House have made funding announcements, including budget announcements, over the years, and all of them have done it outside of this place.

My friends the Liberals across the way may remember that back in 1988 Robert Nixon, the then treasury minister for the Liberal government, delivered his budget speech outside of the Legislature. There were no Speaker's rulings, no points of order, no points of privilege, and as was done this year, all of the budgetary procedures, except for the venue of the budget speech itself, were followed. In the examples I cite, all members of the Legislative Assembly were invited to the presentation. Whether they chose to attend or not was up to them. There was a budget lock-up that was held in the usual fashion. There were budget papers that were tabled with the clerks at the time the speech was read, in keeping with all the standing orders and all of the procedures of this place.

The fourth point I want to make is that, at the same time, copies were distributed to each and every member of the Legislative Assembly. Whether they were there at the speech or were in their office, copies were delivered to them.

The last point I want to make is that opposition leaders and members were given every opportunity to respond to the budget in the media on the day the budget was tabled and read by the Minister of Finance. All of those points were kept in place.

Accepting the Speaker's ruling and voting for the motion that's before the House today would change the very way government is done here in Ontario, and I might add that it would change it not for the better. It would make it more difficult for the elected members of this House to do the people's business, and it would be more difficult to address the challenges that matter to Ontarians the most. This includes things like creating and maintaining a strong economy, which this government has a very proud and strong record on, in creating jobs in this province—well over 1.1 million new jobs created in Ontario since September 1995. This is something that the people of Ontario care very deeply about. They care because they know that it's only a strong economy that will create the jobs and allow us to support investments in the priority areas such as health care, education and secure and safe communities, just like the people of Scarborough Southwest want. Only a strong economy provides the means to make the record investments while maintaining a balanced budget. It's only a strong economy that keeps Ontario moving forward.

Keeping the economy moving forward and keeping it moving on a strong footing is what matters most to my constituents in Scarborough Southwest, and that's, I believe, what matters to people across Ontario, in all communities, from north to south and east to west.

Speaking of that strong economy, our government has been able to invest another \$1.9 billion in health care this year. That brings our increase to over \$10 billion since we were first elected by the people of Ontario in 1995.

This record investment in health care now rises to some \$27.6 billion in our province, the most money ever spent by any provincial government in our province's history in health care, and I might add that we've done it



in the absence of the federal government being there to assist the province of Ontario in bringing forward these increases.

This \$27.6 billion also includes unprecedented funding to meet the needs of our province's growing and aging population. Demographics cannot be denied, and that's why I'm proud to say that our government has invested record amounts in long-term care and home care since we were first elected by the people of our province in 1995. This includes, I might add, our \$1.2-billion investment in long-term care that will add 20,000 new and some 16,000 redeveloped long-term-care beds across Ontario. I might add that these beds are the first new long-term-care beds added to our system in Ontario since 1988. Although all three parties agreed we had a growing and aging population, it was only this government that moved forward to build those beds so that our seniors, the very people who have helped build this province, would have secure, homelike settings in which to live.

I'm pleased to report that some 17,500 new long-term-care beds have been built or will soon be redeveloped across the province and almost 7,000 existing beds have or will soon be upgraded to meet the modern design standards that are needed in our province. Each and every one of these beds will mean even better care for residents. It will also mean greater peace of mind for their families and loved ones. We're providing better care for the residents and greater peace of mind for families and loved ones. That's what it's all about.

I know that in my community of Scarborough Southwest there are 197 new beds being built at the Trilogy long-term-care facility right at the corner of McCowan Road and Eglinton Avenue East. There are also 75 redeveloped beds at the Craiglee long-term-care facility in my riding of Scarborough Southwest just in the Kingston Road and Ridgemoor area. This is providing more jobs for the people of Scarborough Southwest. It's providing better care for our seniors, and it's providing greater peace of mind for family members and loved ones of those individuals in Scarborough Southwest.

The Ernie Eves government has also delivered some \$200 million in new funding for long-term care in Ontario in less than a year. These are real dollars that will make a real difference to residents in Ontario's long-term-care facilities.

I'm proud to say that the 2003 budget in Ontario is Ontario's fifth balanced budget in a row. When you think back to the last time this actually happened, this would have been almost 100 years ago that we had five consecutive balanced budgets in this province. That's what the people of Scarborough Southwest are talking about; that's what the people of Ontario are talking about: balanced budgets, a strong economy and more jobs. That's what they're talking about.

When you think about it, it's been nearly a century since we've had five consecutive balanced budgets in our province. It was the pro-growth, tax-cutting, fiscally responsible policies of our government that have made it happen. This is the substance that the people of Ontario care about because these are the results that make a

difference in people's lives. More jobs make a difference, more opportunity for our children makes a difference, and letting people keep more of the money they earned in the first place makes a difference. Not borrowing from future generations to pay for the programs of today also makes a difference.

By continuing to manage taxpayer dollars wisely, we'll continue to have the resources that we need to invest in that better health care for Ontarians and their children and their kids. We'll also have the resources we need to invest in our schools.

Every Ontarian wants the same thing for our province's children: to give them the opportunity to achieve their full potential. In 1995, Ontario's public education system needed reform and it needed renewal. The curriculum was outdated; our students were lagging behind. Employers and post-secondary institutions complained that high school graduates lacked basic reading and writing skills. There was no accountability to parents. There was no accountability to taxpayers. I'm proud to say that with the 2003 budget, those days are gone.

Today in classrooms across Ontario, our reforms mean success for our students. Student-focused funding means more money for students in classrooms and less money for administration. It also means increased and protected funding for special education, as well as improved accountability for parents and taxpayers. We're also ensuring that there are enough spaces in Ontario's post-secondary institutions for students who are graduating this year and next year.

In fact, in this 2003 budget we also let Ontario's seniors know how much we owe to them. They are the people who built and created the prosperous province we have today. That's why, in recognition, the Ernie Eves government is proposing in the 2003 budget to complete our commitment to reduce residential education property taxes through new tax relief for seniors. Under our proposal, every senior homeowner or tenant would receive a tax credit to reimburse them for the residential education tax they pay, beginning July 1, 2003, if adopted by this House. That's every senior homeowner or tenant; it does not matter whether you're a homeowner or a tenant. If passed by the Legislative Assembly, this will provide tax relief for those seniors.

**1600**

It would also mean some \$450 million in net benefits annually for those people who have given so much to Ontario. This is an average net savings of some \$475 for the 945,000 senior households in our province. Together with the personal income tax age credit, additional support for seniors through the Ontario property and sales tax credits, and the benefits from Ontario's personal income tax cuts, this new initiative would mean some \$2.5 billion in tax savings per year for our seniors across Ontario. This is what the people are talking about in Scarborough Southwest, and that's what they're talking about across our great province. They're talking about tax relief, because taxes continue to be too high.

Once we get past this motion, we'll have the opportunity to vote on this year's budget. Should it pass this

House, it would give the people of Scarborough Southwest and the people of Ontario what matters to them the most, and that is much-needed tax relief. Our government is proud to offer this sort of support to seniors across our province. I know it matters to them because they've told me.

I want to share a little story with all the members here today. When I was campaigning in 1995, I was talking with a neighbour of mine and I told him I was a member of a party that was going to cut taxes to help Ontarians keep more of their hard-earned money in their own pockets. When I told him this and showed him the Common Sense Revolution, he said to me, "Dan, I'll believe it when I see it." Well, after we were elected by the people of Ontario and proposed the first of our many tax-cutting, pro-growth budgets for this province, I talked to my neighbour again. Once again he told me, "I'll believe it when I see it." Not long after that we passed our first budget, and that budget, I might add, introduced real tax relief for the people of Ontario. My neighbour and I chatted once again, but this time he brought me the stub from his pension cheque. He had it in his hand, and his words to me were, "Now I believe it. There is more money in my pension cheque." So he saw a direct result of our tax cuts going right to his pension, which resulted in more dollars in his pocket, allowing him to keep more of what he had earned and worked so hard over all those years to keep, and that's what it's all about.

These are the things that matter most to the people of Scarborough Southwest and that matter most to the people of Ontario. This is what makes a difference in their lives. I think we are confusing ourselves if we think the location of this year's budget is what matters most to the people of Ontario. It's not the location of the speech that constituents have been talking about but rather the substance of the speech: what is in that budget, what are we talking about, how does this budget help Ontario, how does it help their own community, how does it provide more jobs, how does it provide opportunities for the future for their children and grandchildren, how does it affect health care in our province—whether it's in Algoma-Manitoulin or in Scarborough Southwest, we want to know how health care is going to be affected.

The issue of policing—we saw in the budget that there were a thousand more police officers to be hired in this province. That announcement was made just recently by the Premier and our Minister of Public Safety and Security in Scarborough. We came to Scarborough and were joined by several people when we announced 1,000 new police officers, with some 300 officers being assigned to the OPP right across our province and the rest, 700 officers, being assigned to municipal police services across our province. I know, Speaker, that you'll be fighting for police officers in your community, and like you I'll want to see that Toronto gets its fair share and that within Toronto the people of Scarborough can see the direct result of having additional police officers on our streets so that individuals can have a safe and secure community. That's what matters most to them; that's

what matters to the people of Scarborough Southwest. I saw that again last Thursday night when I attended that public meeting. Having a safe and secure community is what is important to the people who live in the Danforth Road and St Clair Avenue East area of Scarborough Southwest, and indeed the whole riding. People want a safe and secure community.

That's what they're talking about: the substance and policies that leave more money in the pockets of individuals across this province and invest in the key priority areas such as health care and education. That's why we need to vote down this motion today and move forward to take care of the business of Ontarians and the business that matters to them the most. Those issues are a strong economy, tax relief and continued investments in health care and education right across our province. That's what matters most to the people of Scarborough Southwest, that's what matters most to the people of Ontario and that's why we need to move forward and get on with the debate.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I'm very honoured that I have an opportunity to speak to the motion that has been put by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Unlike some of my colleagues across the way who would intimate that this is not an important debate, I would suggest that it is absolutely quintessential to what we are all about as a Parliament.

I would also like to make some comments with regard to the Speaker. I was surprised when I listened today to the member from Durham, who would suggest that the ruling the Speaker made with regard to this contempt issue might be biased. What I have observed from the Speaker of this Legislature is that he works very hard to keep us all in line, and that's not easy here. This can be a very raucous place. During my almost four years here, what I have observed is the very balanced and level hand of the Speaker. As a mother of four children, I liken his role to that of a referee in a hockey, baseball, basketball or soccer game. He makes determinations or calls, not because he's favouring one team or the other, but because it's an issue of fair play. That's the role of the Speaker.

So when the Speaker made his ruling last Thursday, we all—everyone in this House—listened very carefully. I think certainly it was broadly received in the public that the Speaker did a very thorough job in reviewing the constitutional aspects, the past practices and procedures aspects. I am just surprised that there would be members of this Legislature who would suggest that, given the very thorough consideration of the Speaker, it was anything less than a very balanced and fair decision. As a consequence of that good work on behalf of all of us assembled here, we are now able to debate a very important motion put forward by my colleague the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I want to say a bit about Mr Conway as well. When it was announced that the budget would be delivered outside of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Conway reacted immediately. He reacted very strongly. I have to say that,



as a colleague of his, I was very proud to see someone so ably defend the parliamentary process of which we are all a part. When he stood in his place to raise his point of privilege, you could have heard a pin drop in this assembly. Mr Conway is fondly known, certainly on this side of the House, and I think by many members of the Legislature, as "The Senator," the most experienced senior member of the Legislature. To this role he brings not just a very thoughtful—but he is so very well read on these matters and so respected and his point was made so eloquently that I know members on all sides of the House applauded his delivery on that particular day. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to speak to the very important motion that Mr Conway has put to the Legislative Assembly, because I do believe it is a defining moment for our parliamentary democracy.

I want to make some reference to comments made by some of the government members, some who chose to attack the Speaker and some who have suggested that, with regard to the budget document, Ontarians really don't care where the budget was delivered, they only care about what was in the document.

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Certainly as a representative from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, it's my privilege to share with you what the people in my riding said about that particular issue. This was a letter to the editor in the Kingston Whig-Standard that states very clearly—and I took this as a direction; the title is, "Tell Eves This is Unacceptable."

"Apparently, the Ernie Eves government has no boundaries restricting its contempt or ignorance for the people of Ontario who elected it." The writer goes on to say, "Parliamentary rules and procedure should at least force this government to enact its corporate agenda by the rules that govern ... parliamentary democracy. These rules have been part of our Canadian heritage since Confederation." That's what was written in a paper that is a significant medium in my riding, and I'm privileged to have the opportunity to share that here today.

I represent a part of the province that's very rich in its history and tradition. That history and tradition go right back to the United Empire Loyalists. These were people who fled a country where they were no longer able to keep their allegiance to the monarch. They were no longer allowed to do that, so they came to Canada. They landed on the shores of Adolphustown. Every year there is a re-enactment of the landing of the United Empire Loyalists. There's a real core group of people in my riding who work hard to remind the people in the community of our British roots and our British traditions. So I'm sure it doesn't surprise you when I say that, with the announcement to remove the budget from the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, there are many people in my riding who are particularly attached to tradition, particularly the British parliamentary tradition, who were absolutely aghast, who were outraged that their tradition was being flouted in this way.

It was certainly evident in a lot of the reports in the media in my riding. I think that I have a responsibility to share those here today so that all members of the Legislature, who have the responsibility to consider the motion at hand, truly understand what was being said across the province about this most unusual act by the government of Ontario.

Paul Schliesmann, who writes for the Kingston Whig-Standard, writes, "'Everything is the same, except the budget itself will be delivered in the community to the people of the province of Ontario,' said ... Eves, when making his shocking announcement this week about the studio presentation.

"Sorry, Premier, but it isn't the same, and you well know it.... Eves and Ecker are displaying a complete disregard for democratic protocol and opposition MPPs. Those MPPs, Liberal and NDP, are elected to sit in the Legislature opposite the government to act as the eyes and ears of the people—Ontario's citizens." That is who we represent. To suggest that by taking the budget presentation out of this place that somehow is making it more accessible to the people of Ontario is absolutely ludicrous.

One of the members of the government, in their remarks, suggested, "Well, you know, the members of the opposition were invited." That's like saying you're invited to go to work. I work here, and this is where I should come to do the business of the people.

This event was not a public event. A friend of mine tried to enter the property at Magna to hear the budget and was turned away by the security people on the site and very clearly told by the security people in the parking lot, "This is not a public event." That was the message to that taxpayer in Ontario at the Magna site. I guess it had to be who you knew, not simply the fact that you were a taxpayer, that you had access to that particular presentation.

My constituency office is located in the town of Greater Napanee. The voice of Greater Napanee is the Napanee Beaver. I am very happy to say that this year Jean Morrison, who is the editor and owner of the Napanee Beaver, is celebrating 50 years in the business, and has done an outstanding job in the community representing the views of the people there.

The editorial in the Napanee Beaver on March 21 was this: "The Ernie Eves-led Progressive Conservative government in Ontario apparently tried to pull off its own pre-emptive strike—against opposition parties—by deciding to present the 2003 budget outside the Legislature." The editor went on to say, "However, no matter what your political persuasion, a democracy relies on the ability of differing opinions and ideas to come together in debate and deliberation.... Democracy protects the right to comment freely on the affairs of the government, and taking away one of the vehicles of that commentary—in this case, the opposition parties' right to speak to the budget in the Legislature—is not compatible with democratic government." That was in the Napanee Beaver.

I share these this afternoon because I'm very proud of what the people in my riding have to say about this. I

have a responsibility to share in this debate what the sense is out there. I'm also very happy—well, not happy. I guess I am affirmed in my position that I am able to report to the people of Ontario that I have not received one call from any constituent who would say to me, "Mrs Dombrowsky, I think this idea to move the presentation of the budget out of the Legislature is a good idea," for this reason or that reason or whatever. I didn't receive such a letter, e-mail, phone call or any kind of verbal contact. To the last person, everyone who has contacted me on this issue has been absolutely—the range has been from disappointment to absolute disgust that this kind of manoeuvre would be pulled.

What people in the province recognize is that this isn't just something that the government members are doing to the members of the opposition or the members of the third party. The people of Ontario understand that their rights have been abridged. They understand that, and that's why they're coming to me. They're calling me. People say, "You know, Mrs Dombrowsky, we're not of your political persuasion, but I never thought that I would see a government act in this way, and I cannot support this action. If your government were to do this, I wouldn't support it either. It is absolutely an affront to all that I think is sacred."

The suggestion by some of the members of the government—certainly the Minister of Finance and the Premier have suggested that the average Ontarian doesn't care where the budget is presented; they only care what's in it. That got a reaction in my office. I received e-mails from people who said, "I'm an ordinary citizen. I'm just an ordinary person, and do you know what? I do care. I do care where the budget is presented. That's what I thought I elected you to do. I thought I elected you to go to the Legislative Assembly and address the issues of the people of Ontario." I can only say I'm surprised and I'm abysmally disappointed that the Premier and Minister of Finance have dismissed in such a cavalier way what the average person in Ontario might be thinking. Don't underestimate these people; they do value this place.

There are a couple more points that have been made by people in my riding, and I think they have been made very effectively, probably more effectively than I would be able to make them. I think it's important that I have an opportunity to read those as well. I want to quote from an article that was written by Linda Cameron. She also writes for the Kingston Whig-Standard, which is certainly a significant media voice in eastern Ontario and is recognized across the province.

1620

Ms Cameron is a freelance writer for the Whig. This is what she wrote:

"The decision by Ernie Eves' Tory government in Ontario to present the provincial budget on March 27 in a TV studio before an audience of hand-picked Tory cronies ... flies in the face of democracy.

"This unprecedented move to present the budget outside the Legislature, breaking tradition and protocol, is a desperate move by a desperate government....

"A question all of us need to ask is: What will come next in the Conservative government's relentless move to erode this province's valued and esteemed institutions?"

She goes on, "War veterans who fought for democracy that is ensured by government accountability to an elected Parliament and, ultimately, to the people, must find this denigration of the sacred institution they fought to uphold offensive."

She further states, "How do we know what valued institution and tradition they will tear down next?"

I think that Ms Cameron has made some very salient points. If this action by the government is left unchallenged, at the very least, if we were not to look for an opportunity to debate this in this place, it does beg the question, what next? Where will the throne speech next be delivered? Can votes in the Legislature be called outside of this place?

It certainly is a question that I've thought about a lot, and it perplexes me and sometimes frightens me. As Ms Cameron has indicated, the government appears desperate in some instances to get its own way. Just exactly what mechanism will be next on the sacrificial altar? I think that's why it's important that we are having this debate this afternoon.

Before my time is up, I want to again read the motion that we're debating today: "That this House declares that it is the undoubted right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

What my colleague the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is asking all of us in this room to affirm is that, whatever the wisdom or the foolishness of this decision has been—and I respect that there will always be people on both sides of that debate—perhaps we can all take a lesson from it, that we can listen to what I consider to be an overwhelming reaction by the people of Ontario. Certainly if you consider what has been in the media, the media have widely and broadly castigated this action as undemocratic.

So considering the motion that's before us for consideration, what we are saying is that henceforth any government elected in the province of Ontario will bring the budget to the elected people here first.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** How can they vote against it?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** My colleague from Sudbury has asked, "How can anyone in this assembly vote against that?" That is what we are all about. This motion is absolutely fundamental to this place, to parliamentary democracy: that henceforth all budgets will be presented in the Legislative Assembly.

I commend my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who I believe has put a most compelling argument. I have to say that when I listen to the members of the government—and I really am listening for a good reason that would convince me that maybe there would be some exceptions, but I have not heard that. I think that in the interests of defending what people have gone to war about, we have no choice but to support the motion



that is before us at this time. I have offered my comments as best I have been able to recollect the conversations that I've had with folks in my riding, as well as what I personally am committed to as a parliamentarian.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** I am honoured to be standing up here today, because when I look around this chamber, it says to me what democracy is all about. Quite frankly, I cannot imagine a budget speech, or anything else of major consequence to the government or the people of Ontario, being dealt with in any other place.

This is a tradition that goes back a long time, not just in Ontario but in England. Seven hundred years ago, during the reign of Edward I, a parliamentary tradition was established in that country that has spread literally around the world. That tradition is a very simple one. For the king or his nobles, as it was in those days, to raise taxes, one had to go before Parliament and seek the permission of the people to do so. Whether those taxes were to build a bridge or a road or to raise armies in times of war, when those taxes were raised, it was done with the consent of the people and the full knowledge of their representatives assembled in the British House of Commons. Only when that happened could one go forward and raise the taxes with the consent of the people, through their representatives.

Of course, Parliament has evolved.

**Mr Bisson:** They had no trouble getting consent back then.

**Mr Prue:** Yes.

Of course, traditions have changed. Legislatures have evolved. Matters are much different today than they were 700 years ago. But the one thing that has remained steadfast through all of that is for the peoples' representatives, assembled in the Commons, to vote on and receive a budget first. It has happened in literally every country into which British parliamentary democracy has gone and flourished.

Of course, 700 years ago, those who voted were landowners. The Commons was confined to those who owned property, and those who were allowed to vote for their representatives had to prove that they were landowners. Ordinary people who worked in rudimentary factories in those days, or toiled on the land for someone else, did not have a right to vote or be represented. Those traditions changed, of course. It went through a stage in this country where at first only men could vote. Then in the early 1900s, with the rise of the suffragette movement, women were allowed to vote as well, the first time federally in 1921.

**Mr Bisson:** In the 1960s it was the aboriginal people.

**Mr Prue:** Yes. In the 1960s the aboriginal peoples of this country finally had an opportunity. Today, all people can vote. But the tradition remains much the same, although I would put it to everyone that it is much more democratic today than it was 700 years ago. The tradition of the budget has remained unchanged, and I would submit that it needs to remain unchanged.

We have done some research. It's very difficult to look for a negative for something like what happened

here in Ontario in March of this year. We have done research into every parliamentary democracy in the world using a British form of government, trying to see whether someone else ever attempted what this government attempted to do.

We have looked at research in Britain, the mother of all Parliaments. We have looked in Australia and in New Zealand. We have looked at Fiji and South Africa and Zimbabwe. We have looked at Ghana, Nigeria, Singapore, India, Pakistan, Jamaica, Guyana, and every one of the other nations that were once part or who remain part of the Commonwealth.

We could not find a government anywhere that has attempted to do what this government has, and that is to take the fundamental right of Parliament to sit in judgment on a budget and to pass that budget to raise funds on behalf of the people of the jurisdiction—no one else has taken it outside their Legislature.

**1630**

To say it is the correct move to vote against the motion you have today is tantamount to saying that what you did was right. You fly in the face of parliamentary democracy as we understand it in all its many forms in all the countries around the world. I trust and would hope there is some sober second thought across the floor, that there are people over there who understand it is of such importance that the parliamentary tradition not be abrogated, that they understand the parliamentary tradition is as important—or more important, I would put to you—than the actual content of this budget or any budget.

What we do today in making our decision on the motion and the amendment is not only important to Ontario; it is important to the other nine provinces, it is important to Canada and I would hazard saying it is probably important to other jurisdictions that follow our Commonwealth tradition around the world. Just as Mr Speaker often talks about other jurisdictions when he is making a ruling, be they within Canada or elsewhere—he will occasionally quote the House of Lords, he will occasionally quote the Parliament of Australia or New Zealand, he will occasionally talk about the government of India or Singapore and how they have reacted in a parliamentary crisis or to a parliamentary question on procedure—I would state it will happen in other jurisdictions looking at what we do here today.

We need to ensure that we make a correct decision. We need to make sure that although this was an aberration, it does not happen again. We need to assure the people of this province and the people who are watching this province that we have had some sober second thought on what initially may have seemed to be a good idea but which is today almost universally recognized as a place we ought not to go.

The Speaker made a courageous decision, I would suggest, in taking on members of his own party. The Speaker made a courageous decision to fight for what he believed were democratic values that were imperilled by the decision to move the budget to Magna Corp in Brampton. When he was rendering his decision just a few

days ago, he spoke about a lingering unease that he had and that the people of Ontario had on our traditions being abrogated.

He posed three questions, and for the balance of my speech I want to deal with these three questions. He stated:

"First, what does the planned presentation of a budget speech outside the House suggest about the relevancy and primacy of Parliament? It is one thing not to make the traditional budget speech in the House because the government is backed into such a decision by an ongoing House process, or a budget leak; it is quite another for the government to have a deliberate plan not to do so.

"Second, if left unchallenged, will this incident not embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes for other kinds of events that traditionally occur in the House?

"Third, why is an extraordinary parliamentary process needed if there is already a process in the House? If the answer is that it enables direct communication with the public, to what extent does such an answer undermine the representative, scrutiny and accountability functions of Parliament?"

The relevancy and primacy of Parliament, of course, are paramount or should be paramount to everyone who is elected to this House. It was only some 18 or 19 months ago that I came here, but I still remember the oath I signed, and that oath promised to uphold the traditions of the Queen and, through the Queen, of this Parliament. It is an oath that I hold extremely sacred. It is far more sacred to me to uphold that tradition than to win an election; far more important to uphold that tradition than to score political points in the debate that goes on back and forth here every day. It is a tradition I will fight to uphold and that I hope to pass down relatively unscathed with 700 years' worth of experience to whom-ever may succeed me in this election or in a subsequent one.

This is our chief democratic institution. It is the place where the people's will is carried out. It is the place where many from our society look to see how government is going to affect their daily lives. Whether it comes with tax increases or tax reductions, where those monies are expended or where social programs are changed or modified, it will affect, and does affect, virtually every single person every day a decision is made here. They look to their democratic institutions as a source of pride and one which they will, I would suggest to all of you, uphold without a second thought.

Many people participate in the democratic process in a very simple way. That simple way is, once every four years, or approximately every four years, they go to the polls and they vote for the person, or perhaps for the leader or the party, that they think best represents their interests. They may or may not do anything else political for four years, until again called upon to do so. But they expect, in casting that ballot, that their member will be here and that their member will speak on their behalf on the pertinent issues of the day. They have busy lives too,

and oftentimes they do not have time to consider all of the facts. They trust us, the 103 members of this House, to do what is right—to debate it, to make the key decisions and to represent their interests. Whenever members are not allowed to do that in this House, the rights of those who vote once every four years are put at peril. We live in a representative democracy. That democracy is that you choose the person to represent you and then you let them do so. That goes for everything from budget expenditures to taxes.

The most important thing that I would suggest we do, the most important thing in the life of this government or any government, is the raising of taxes and the budget. In fact, the budget itself is only one of, I think, two real ways that a government can be defeated. The other is on a vote of non-confidence. It has to be a large money bill, a budget or a vote of non-confidence that will bring a government down. In fact, that's what the government of Quebec has decided. They have a budget which, if defeated, would cause an immediate election or a non-confidence motion, which is brought up every month or every second month, and it is upon that that a government would be defeated, and not routine bills that go through their Legislature.

It is that which I ask this government to think about, because I heard some talk about this vote being treated as a non-confidence motion. I would suggest it is not a non-confidence motion. This motion is designed to protect this institution, plain and simple. It is not from our party—it is from the Liberal party—but it is a good motion, which in the future will ensure that the budget is always presented to the people's representatives in the place that it was meant to be presented.

You have the second argument, which is the parallel outside the House. I would suggest that if this is allowed to continue, or if it ever continued again, it would weaken the role of members of the Legislature. We would then have very much what we saw in Brampton: you would have an infomercial budget before people who were invited, people who were sympathetic to the government, people who lobby for the government, people who contribute to the government, people who pay to have the ear of the government. I would suggest that that is not what any of us wants to see, because what that means in the end is that ordinary people are shut out of the process. Unless you have the \$500 or \$1,000 or \$2,000 to meet with a minister or to go to a lavish banquet at which the Premier is present, you will not be heard. Most ordinary people rely on their members of provincial Parliament in the constituency offices to convey what they think, and I would suggest most of them think that the budget in Brampton was a mistake.

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You have the third question posed by the Speaker: "We already have a process; what do we need with another?" I would suggest that for the government to say we need direct communication is an error. You need direct communication, all right, but you need it with the members opposite. You need to be forthright. You need



to be able to stand up and boldly say what you are going to do and not be afraid of the scrums, not be afraid of the press and not be afraid of what I might say or what anyone else might say. If your idea is a good idea and if your budget is a good budget, it will survive the test, notwithstanding that some people will like it and some will not.

A hundred years ago when this Legislature was built, 136 years ago when this country was founded, it was a very different electorate than we have today. The distances were sometimes insurmountable. The railway would bring people right across the country, but it would take days to get to Ottawa. The railway would take days even to get from northern Ontario to this locale. You had people who were not as well educated as today. Mass media was not there. There were no women who were allowed to vote and no aboriginal peoples who were allowed to vote.

Today, I would suggest, the distance is every bit as great, but the time taken to travel it is less. That's why members of Parliament and members of provincial Parliament can do what they could not do, and that is go home on weekends to see their constituents, to find out what their constituents say and think, so that they can come back here and reflect that view.

We also know that today government is far more complex. It is far more difficult for some, even with better education, to understand how the process works here. Many people do not understand that process. All of us, including members on the government bench, will know that you get calls from time to time—in fact you get all too many calls—asking, “How do you get a bill through the House? How do you change the legislation? How do you change the budget process? How can we get some more money for the disabled?” We all get asked those questions. I would suggest we need to convey those questions in our daily speaking roles here in this Legislature.

Today we have instantaneous media. The media can report—as we saw here today—and scrum outside on something someone said or did in a matter of seconds. The instantaneous media is there, and it is a fact of life. But it does not negate even for a second, even for a nanosecond, what any of us do in this Legislature. In fact, it makes us ever more vigilant in what we must say and what we must do.

Last, but not least, in terms of the process: the process here is a good process. I have heard others talk about the old Liberal—judicial, not Liberal; excuse me—the old judicial adage that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done. There is a far more important process inside this Legislature, and that is one the Speaker upholds. It is to allow the majority to rule but it upholds the right of the minority. That is by far the most important thing that any Speaker does in this Legislature, in the Commons or a person who rules in a civic forum: to uphold the rights of the minority so that everything that the minority tries to bring out, everything they try to say is said, is heard, is debated. If the majority uses its will in the end to vote some other way, that is fine; those are the

rules, and they must be followed. But to take away the rights of the minority, to take away those rights so that there is no debate in this House, to take away those rights is to certainly lessen democracy.

The Speaker, as I said, was courageous. The Speaker defended democracy. The Speaker defended this venerable institution. The Speaker has defended and I am sure will continue to defend the evolution so that changes might be made to the Legislature as is necessary. In fact, many of us, including myself, sat on a committee over this last year, talking about ways to make the Legislature more relevant and—what was most important—to make the backbench MPPs, the ordinary members who are not members of the cabinet, more relevant to this institution. This is what Mr Finkelstein suggested as well in his well-worded arguments.

I invite the members opposite to do the honourable thing: to vote for these two motions, secure in the fact that 10, 15 or 20 years from now people will remember you stood up for democracy.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** A week ago, the member from Windsor West stood up and made the comment that it's nice to have the House back after four months. She alluded to the fact—and I'm not sure if I'm quoting her exactly—that we hadn't been working in that four-month period. Now, I don't know about the member from Windsor West, but I know I've been working my tail off, and I suspect that a number of other members in this Legislature have been doing likewise in that four-month intercession.

**Mr Duncan:** No, you haven't. You were golfing.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** No, actually, I say to the member from Windsor-St Clair, I didn't have a golf club in my hand in that four-month period. Maybe you did, but I didn't. I was in areas where, had I had the time, I would have done some golfing, but I didn't have the time.

We had committee hearings. We had meetings of all kinds. Many of us had meetings with our constituents and, of course, we were trying to solve problems for them. I believe that all of us, in many cases, were quite successful in solving those problems.

But we come back to this House, and we are faced with a motion by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke that we are debating, which may or may not, depending on your perspective, have anything to do with the future of the lives of Ontarians today. I am not going to criticize the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. In the eight years I've been here, I have never known him to be anything but astute, one who was interested in parliamentary democracy and in the institution of Parliament itself. I have admired his work ethic. I believe this Parliament is going to miss him greatly as a result of his decision to not run in the coming election. He has been here for 28 years and has served with distinction. However, I have—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** No, I'm not going to criticize him. I have a concern; that's all I was going to say. I have a concern with the motion that he has brought forward. His motion reads:

"That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

I know he really believes in the tradition of this place, and I know many of the things that have evolved in this place have changed tradition. But when he moves that the Legislative Assembly in Parliament be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario, does he mean that no longer will the members of this place and the media be permitted to go into lock-up before the budget is presented and to view the budget? Does he mean that? Because as we all know, the allowance of lock-ups was a departure from tradition.

We also know there are many things in this place that are not tradition.

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** Is lock-up in the standing orders?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** No, lock-up is definitely not in the standing orders, I say to the member from Scarborough Centre.

I also say to the members present that televised proceedings of the Legislature are a dramatic departure from tradition.

**Ms Mushinski:** In the standing orders?  
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**Mr Wettlaufer:** No, that is also not in the standing orders, I say to the member from Scarborough Centre.

In addition, Hansard was a dramatic departure from the proceedings of this place. Hansard has only been in place for—what—47 years, 49 years? Prior to that, there were no recorded proceedings. That too, I say to the member from Scarborough Centre, is not in the standing orders.

Speaker Carr, in his decision the other day—and you will notice that I say "decision"; it was not a ruling. So in some of the things I say here today, I am not questioning a ruling of the Speaker. The Speaker said, "I am finding that a *prima facie* case" is established. It's not a ruling. He said, "I want to reiterate that ... it is now up to the House to decide what to do."

I do have some comments, and I'll tell you why I have comments about the ruling. In the few days since the ruling, I have had more conversations, more phone calls with my constituents than I did about the budget being presented outside the House. People in my riding actually found the decision of the Speaker offensive.

He did not—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the member from Kitchener Centre.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I would like to point out to the members of this House that I was canvassing the neighbourhoods, not for election purposes but as I do between elections, for the entire period that the controversy over the budget was being relayed by the media. In that time, I had three conversations with constituents, but not one of them was raised when I was going to from door to door. I talked to thousands of people during that time, and when

I said to them, as I always do when I go from door to door, "I am here to determine whether you have any problems with the government, with me, with the performance of the government, with my performance of my role as an MPP or to see if you have any problems you have not brought to my attention," the people looked at me and couldn't believe, first of all, that an MPP would go from door to door. I said, "I've been doing it for eight years." Then they said, "Well, what kind of problems would you like us to bring forward?" I said, "What about the budget. Have you had any problems with the budget or the way it was presented?" "No." In fact, I had several, including a chartered accountant, by the way, who said, "Who cares where the budget is presented?" They said, "Who cares how it's presented? A budget is a budget is a budget."

I have had more complaints questioning what is going to happen now since Thursday afternoon. Speaker Carr stated that standing order 39(a) "gives ministers a wide latitude to deposit with the Clerk of the House any documents they wish to present to the House ... even if the House is not meeting." That was done. The budget was presented to the Clerk of the House.

He said, "I appreciate that standing orders 57 and 58 provide for a budget process inside the House, but they do not prohibit a supplementary budget presentation outside the House.... I am satisfied that the House intended that this standing order should be given a broad interpretation."

He also said, "I'm reinforcing this view by the knowledge that on April 20, 1988 the Votes and Proceedings, which were published under the authority of Speaker Edighoffer, indicate that the budget and budget papers were deposited with the Clerk of the House pursuant to what is now standing order 39(a)." He admits that "the Treasurer deposited the budget and related papers with the Clerk of the House in order to protect the confidentiality of the budget process and to release the lock-up." I'm sorry, that relates back to 1988. I take that one back.

**Mr Bisson:** That's part of the 10 lost years.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'm not going there, I say to the member for Timmins-James Bay.

**Mr Bisson:** I just haven't heard it in a while.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** We know that there was a period of 10 lost years between 1985 and 1995, but you're the one that brought it up. I was not going to rub your nose in it.

**Mr Bisson:** I was just waiting for it.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Well, I wasn't going to.

Speaker, I'm glad you let me digress there. He said, "I have reflected on whether the standing orders permit the budget to be deposited with the Clerk of the House after the Legislature has been prorogued."

Speaker Carr also said, "Looking to our precedents, I note that, apart from the 1988 budget incident, there have been other occasions when a budget or a budget-type speech has not been presented inside the House." I'm wondering if these other circumstances will no longer be permitted. I'm wondering that regardless of the circum-



stances, if another type of budget, budget presentation or budget-type speech will be permitted. I'm wondering if there will be any extenuating circumstances which will allow a budget-type speech to be presented outside the House.

Speaker Carr ruled, "The member will also know that for better or worse"—sorry, that was Speaker Edighoffer who ruled that. "The member will also know that for better or worse there is nothing in our standing orders or procedures which compels the minister to make the statements inside the House, including budgets, and indeed there is nothing out of order about announcing the budget outside of the House...." These are some of the things that some of the members in my riding are finding inconsistent. On one hand, this was stated, and on the other, Speaker Carr ruled that he was making a decision in another direction.

So there is some confusion amongst the public, and I confess to you, Speaker, that I have some confusion. I would never criticize Speaker Carr, because he's a friend and a colleague, and I think in three, almost four years now, he has ruled in an impartial manner. That is all we as parliamentarians can ever expect of a Speaker: to rule in an impartial manner. I can say to you, Speaker, that because of my confusion, even though he ruled in an impartial manner—or decided; not a ruling, decided in an impartial manner, I think the decision was wrong, but I can't criticize him. I can't do that. But nevertheless, I think that you would agree there are certain elements of the decision which can lead me to question where we're going in the future.

I can assure you there was never any attempt by anybody on this side of the House to demonstrate contempt for this place. We all have a very, very high regard for the institutions of the Legislature of Ontario, for the institution of the Parliaments throughout the world. I know that all of us in this place feel that way, not just on this side of the House. I believe the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is bringing forward his motion with the greatest of intent. But there is so much confusion brought about by the decision and the reasons for the decision by Speaker Carr, and also the motion itself—what effect will it have on the future traditions, the future changes that this place might undergo?

1700

I think we need to focus a little bit on the budget itself. There were comments made by the media that the budget was an infomercial. There were comments made by the members opposite that it was an infomercial. How can anyone suggest that it was an infomercial when you talk about this increase in money to hospitals and to health care in this province? We're talking about an increase to hospitals to the tune—well, since 1995, we're giving over \$10 billion to hospitals now. Health care in total, we've increased spending from \$17.4 billion in 1995 to \$27.6 billion this year. Since 1995, we've increased \$500 million in capital alone in health care. We have shorter waiting lists. We have increased access to technology, including MRI machines. We have better mental health

services. We are focusing more on keeping people well in this province. That was the budget.

We also talked about providing for families and children. We've created the Ontario child care supplement for working families. We're supporting our seniors. I know the members opposite don't like the fact that we're giving to seniors the property tax refund on the education portion of their taxes. But seniors throughout this province have asked for it, and it's not affecting in any way, shape or form the amount of money that is going to public education. In fact, public education funding has been increased by 14% since 1998. Over the course of the next three fiscal years, it will be increased by another 15%. That's in spite of giving the seniors a tax break that they've asked for.

But some in the media—and I say "some"; I really want to emphasize that word—have suggested that somehow presenting the budget outside of the Legislature wasn't democratic. I would suggest to you that those very ones who decided to boycott the budget, who decided not to communicate the information contained in the budget to the public, were perhaps a little bit less democratic, especially when you consider that no one in this House attempted to circumvent democratic traditions. The decision was made to present the budget outside of the House; however, all of the documentation was presented as required to the Clerk of the House. With no intent did we determine that we were going to try to circumvent debate on the budget. In fact, that's what we would love to do as soon as possible, if we weren't debating this motion.

I think it's important to note that January and February were taken up in pre-budget hearings in order to present a budget. Then it was determined that our work on last year's throne speech had come to an end because we had accomplished what we had set out to do in last year's throne speech. A new throne speech was necessary. But the Premier had committed to presenting a budget by the end of March. Can you imagine what the media and our critics would have said if he had not presented the budget by the end of March in the intercession? It was necessary to do so.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** It continues to amaze me how the people on the government side just don't get it. They do not listen to what the people of Ontario have said. I refer back to the first example, the breakup of Ontario Hydro and the attempted sale—the on-off, on-off sale—of Hydro One. Everyone in this province knew it was wrong. Big business said it was wrong. People on the street said it was wrong. Some government members, quietly, said it was wrong. The only people who believed it was going to work were the Premier and the people in the back room who seem to control this government. Everyone else knew it was wrong, but they went ahead, created a crisis, and now they're trying to solve that crisis.

If anyone on the government side read any newspaper leading up to this budget, if they read their e-mails, if they talked to anyone on the street, they knew that this



was wrong. The people in Ontario said very loudly and very clearly, from the instant the government considered doing this, that it was wrong. But the government plowed ahead and chose to do it in an auto parts training facility rather than the Legislature.

I grant you that the standing orders don't say that they can't do it in a parts warehouse. The standing orders don't say that I can't throw a stone through a glass window here, but I know that I can't do it. It's not stated in the standing orders, but I know it's inherently wrong. Some 700 years of parliamentary tradition in this world have established that it's done in the Legislature.

I'm amazed, first of all, that they went ahead and did it. I think the count of major newspapers in Ontario was something like 81 of the editorials said it was wrong and zero said it was right. Notice the trend there. There is certainly a sense—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** Yes—if you plot the line and the graph, the answer is no, you don't do it there. What amazes me even more is that once it's over and the criticism comes, the Premier can't stand up and say, "Hey, it was wrong." The Premier very clearly had bad advice, but the Premier took the advice. He had the option to not take it. The Premier took the advice. In retrospect, I think the people of Ontario would have appreciated the honesty of saying, "It was a dumb move. It really wasn't a budget; it was an election ploy. It didn't work, and we won't do that again." Instead, the people of Ontario are having to contribute millions and millions of dollars in extra funding for advertisements to try to overcome the really incredibly bad decision.

I really don't believe that everyone in Ontario was wrong on this. I really believe the government should have listened to, not necessarily the people in the Legislature—because you can dismiss us as prejudiced—but they should have listened to the people of Ontario.

If we truly think about it, being a politician isn't a matter of power. People should not want to be on the government side for the power. A government should not cling to power. If ever there is a position in this province that is one of a servant of the people, being an MPP is it. We are elected by individuals to carry their will, their thoughts and their concerns to this central location where, collectively, decisions can be made. But we are genuinely servants of the people.

An MPP should be—and I believe is, in most cases—someone who wants to help shape the future of Ontario for our children and our grandchildren. What an awesome responsibility. What an awesome opportunity we are given in this House to speak for the people in our riding, to bring their collective wisdom together here to do what is best, not just for the Ontario of today but for the future of Ontario. There is an expression I like very much which says, "We do not inherit this land from our parents; we borrow it from our grandchildren." We in this chamber have the unique opportunity of working to make a great future for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren and for others who wish to come to this province.

1710

When the Premier and the government chose to have the budget presented at Magna, it wasn't my rights that were taken away, it was the rights of everyone in my constituency and everyone in your constituency who lost their opportunity to be part of the democratic process.

If you, as members, knock on doors—and I would strongly urge every member of this Legislature not to knock on doors and ask people's opinion in the weeks leading up to and during an election. Every year through the entire mandate of our term we should be knocking on doors. We should be talking to people and asking their opinions.

I have been intrigued by the earlier comments that no one has expressed any displeasure to them about having the budget presented in this training facility, because I don't think the people in my constituency are remarkably different from people anywhere else in Ontario. They have spoken to me in volumes—unsolicited—and have raised their concerns about the attack on the very foundation of democracy. People in Ontario are not stupid. They recognize how democracy works and they know that this is a step toward breaking it.

This, though, isn't the first step in the attack on democracy; this is part of an ongoing attack. In the four years that I have been privileged to be a member here, any bill of any significance was given time allocation. People in the public will often call it closure, but time allocation restricts the ability of the members in this House, on all sides of the House, to bring forward constituents' questions, comments, suggestions. Some 60% of the bills before this Legislature have had time allocation, but it's important to remember that the 60% that were time-allocated were bills of any significance whatsoever that were rushed through the House.

This government has brought to a new low level the amount of consultation taking place with the public who will be affected by these bills, these bills that will change potentially the very way of life for the province or for individuals in it. We don't have time for consultation any more. All the wisdom appears to rest in this province on that side of the Legislature. I find it deeply troubling for democracy when we cannot go back to the people and ask them for their suggestions.

We have seen a multitude of omnibus bills before us, a whole array of clauses affecting every possible way of life, all crammed into one. I was very quick to catch on here that one of the reasons they have these bills is because you can put hostage clauses into the bill. There is a bill that was before this House that I voted on and I, like many members, was in a dilemma. Part of the bill extended family benefits for those who had children born to them or who adopted so that they get 12 months, the same as the federal government has. I'm very supportive of that. I think that's good for families. It helps the bonding take place in the first year of life. That bonding will affect the child for the rest of their life when they become an adult. So that was a good part of the bill, a good clause. Then another part of that bill contained a



clause that enabled employers to ask people to work up to 60 hours a week. Now that's anti-family. Sixty hours a week surely is not conducive to family life when parents can't be present at home to do the bonding with the children. So here we have a pro-family and an anti-family clause in the same bill. I voted against the bill because I felt the 60-hour workweek was fundamentally wrong for families. But those two were indeed opposites that were lumped together. I find that somewhat undemocratic.

The Premier made a commitment to deliver the budget before the end of March and was dismayed that he was not able to do it in the Legislature. Let's be upfront, folks: the Premier prorogued the House so that he didn't have to face questions in this Legislature. It was not by chance, it was not by accident that the House was prorogued. This government made the decision—the Premier made the decision—that the House would be prorogued and we would not be sitting until the last day of March.

We have a considerable number of evening sittings in this Legislature, sitting until 9:30 or even sitting until midnight. The one effect of that that the government is striving for, I believe, is that it avoids question period. You see, the afternoon counts as one day and the evening counts as another day. So they can have twice as many sitting days without having that second question period, because this government clearly doesn't want to respond to questions. They don't want to respond to individuals in Ontario who have concerns.

If I can recall, the last Lieutenant Governor in Ontario, in her farewell speech, noted that in her five years she had signed 15,000 orders in council. Fifteen thousand orders in council in five years is wrong. It is scary that that many decisions had to be made quietly.

As I mentioned earlier, we've had 700 years of democracy. Democracy is probably the most inefficient form of government. It's costly, it's time-consuming, but it is by far the best form of government that exists in the world. We have countries in the world where people are prepared to die to attain democracy. We have countries in the world where people are striving to get to Canada or to Ontario because of our form of government. But it is very, very fragile. It has been said by individuals that revolution is usually followed by a dictatorship. We've had the Common Sense Revolution and we appear to be moving toward a dictatorship, where decisions don't need to be made in the Legislature but can be made in a presidential style.

So we're following that practice, but we need to think of how we attain democracy in this country and we need to think of the cost to maintain it. One need only tour or see photographs of the war cemeteries in Europe and to look at the ages on those headstones to realize the price that was paid in blood for us to maintain our democracy.

My father served in World War II. He left the family for nearly six years and came back a different person than he went. He saw things that he never, ever was able to speak about the rest of his life. That's the price that

was paid for our democratic system here in Ontario, and we should never forget that we have to continue that fight. Democracy is fragile. It can disappear not in one dramatic action but in a series of small actions that, bit by bit, chew it away.

Rather than attacking the Speaker, the Speaker is to be applauded for the thought and the wisdom that he put into making a decision that clearly the people of Ontario were concerned about and felt merited debate. We're watching the erosion of democracy simply with the number of people who are showing up for elections. There are fewer and fewer because they believe their vote doesn't count and they're not an active part of democracy in this country. This does nothing to support that.

We're not seeing enumeration of every house being done, and that means young people are all too often being missed, because it's not important for this government to enumerate. We look at things we can do to attract on-line voting. I'm hearing Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals talk about on-line voting, which would allow young people to participate at a greater rate. I'm not hearing from the government side that they want that. I've got to reiterate: go out and knock on doors each and every year and hear what they're saying.

It is ironic that the explanation given for having the budget at a private place was to take it to the public. As I understand it, anyone can come into these chambers and listen to the debate and be present, but it was held in a facility where it was by invitation. The doors weren't open. The public wasn't invited. It was, in fact, removing it from the public.

This government, a day or so before the budget, invited the MPPs to come. What kind of a democracy do we have that MPPs have to be invited to a budget presentation? A budget that was terribly urgent to be presented hasn't been tabled with this Legislature yet. Here we are halfway through May and this terribly vital budget still hasn't been tabled in this chamber.

1720

So where was the urgency? I think the urgency was to remove it from public scrutiny and public questions. I would reiterate: people recognize that. The people of Ontario are not stupid. This perhaps is plain to me at more than one door, that maybe this wasn't the biggest issue that this government has done to them, but it's kind of the final straw. They have seen, for example, school tax rates, which used to be set locally, are now being set by the bureaucracy in Toronto. I've always fundamentally believed that the person who established your mill rate should be accountable to you through an election process. That's not the case now; it's a bureaucrat who establishes what the education tax rates will be for homes and for businesses. That's stripping away some of the authority of elected officials.

This government has moved more and more of its operations into corporations, which—with Hydro One, for example, and OPG—removes them from the public being able to scrutinize them through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. More democracy is taken and hidden behind closed doors.

If the government will do this with the budget process, I would reiterate a question that's been asked before: what's next? If they are not curtailed and reprimanded on this clear violation of democracy, then what will they do next?

I believe that the right thing for this government to do would be to stand up and say, "We were wrong; it will never happen again." I am dismayed at their defence of what really is indefensible.

**Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services):** I'm very pleased to be able to join in this debate here this afternoon. We're debating the action of reading the budget speech in a place other than here in this Legislature, and a motion that's been presented by Mr Conway across the way that this House declares "that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

I think it's important to have this put in a framework of what the Speaker has said in his preliminary statement before the House. I quote: "Therefore, the Speaker has no authority to make a determination of *prima facie* breach of privilege or contempt where such a determination is based on the constitutionality or legality of the presentation of the March 27 budget outside the House; this House is not the proper place for those questions to be resolved." The Speaker says this is not an issue of constitutionality. Then the Speaker goes on to say, "When I am essentially saying, then, is that the 2003 budget process does not raise a matter of order."

The Speaker has made the framework that this discussion we're having today has nothing to do with the standing orders of the House.

Thirdly he says, "I find that a *prima facie* case of privilege has not been established with respect to the presentation of the 2003 budget outside the House."

The Speaker is also saying that it is not a matter of privilege, as so often has been referred to, when certain things happen to members here in the House. He does then say that he thinks we need to have a discussion here in the House; that a case has been established and it is now up to the House to decide what to do.

I am pleased to join in this debate today. I listened very closely to our former Speaker, the Minister of the Environment, had to say when he referenced these things. As I've thought about this, I cannot bring myself to support the motion that has been proposed to the House.

I consider myself a traditionalist. Whether it's in the holidays we undertake at home or in the way I conduct my daily life, I think I'm a very serious person and take my duties extremely seriously. In fact, the other day I was asked to fill out a form for a young student who was applying to a university, and he was asking me for a reference, he having worked with me over the summer. I was trying to figure out the right thing to fill in. Was it "politician"? I thought, "No, this is a bigger job than that." What I settled on, of course, was the word "legislator," the maker of laws. And when you write that down as your job, it really does strike you how very important

it is what you do. We probably don't think of ourselves in that way when we decide to stand for office. We usually come to this place because we want to do the right thing for our constituencies, because we want to do something to improve the communities in which we live and where our families fall. We're probably quite unclear of many of the details of the job description that's going to be before us. But what we know is that we come here to make the world a better place for those who live in our communities.

After the budget speech was presented, there was some criticism about the decision. I thought again very carefully about what we had done and whether or not, in my judgment, we had done the right thing. I want you to consider how I looked at this decision. I've held many roles as I've been here in this Legislature since 1995. I've been a backbencher, a parliamentary assistant, a minister in several portfolios and the chair of several committees, so I have had a chance to look at Parliament and how it functions from many different viewpoints. What I have come to understand is that this place is flexible. It has evolved, even in the short period of time that I have been here.

For instance, this House normally and historically sits three months on and three months back home in our ridings. The opposition will tell you we're back home having a holiday. What we're really doing is having the opportunity—especially for those members who are far away from their ridings and can't get home through the week, this is a time for them to concentrate and focus their attention on their riding and their constituents. That evolved out of historical decisions about when people could farm or not farm, what was possible by way of travel. Even hunting seasons figured into that many, many years ago.

But the fact of the matter is that when we were first elected to this place and our government, under Premier Harris, had a lot of changes to make, we changed that House schedule. We sat many, many months in addition to the normal House sitting, when we would have, in many cases, liked to go back home to our ridings. Did anyone complain then about contempt of the Legislature because the rules were altered to allow legislators to spend more time in this place? No, they didn't. There wasn't a word.

When we were first here, the tradition of the House was that we would only sit for a few days in December just before we went home for the Christmas break—they were known and still are known as midnight sittings. Now, under our government, we've had so many changes to make to return Ontario to prosperity that it's not uncommon for House sittings to occur in the evening four of the nights that we're here, session after session. In fact, night sittings have become very commonplace. That has all changed since I've come to this place.

When I was on committees years ago, if you wanted to speak to a bill and you were a citizen of the province of Ontario, you would come here to this building, you would go into one of the committee rooms and, if you



were able, you would make a presentation. Now, again to point out how this Legislature and the practices have changed over the years, we travel as a committee, as members, as ministers all over the province. Clerks in the Legislature travel with us; our staffs travel with us. If we're unable to travel or choose not to travel, we also videoconference and teleconference with people all across Ontario. These practices were not in place when I came to this House.

So what does that tell me? It tells me that the practices of reaching out to the people of Ontario, of finding ways to represent them, of making this place work better to respond to the people of Ontario are a flexible thing and that traditions in this place do change.

Now to the budget speech. We have received criticism about our approach on this particular matter, but we have also had support. I've spoken to a number of people who said they thought it was rather interesting. First of all, with all the uproar, they probably paid more attention to the budget than they have in years before. But they also found it very interesting that they could respond interactively. And to those who say, "Well, it was only a selected few who were allowed to be part of the budget speech," may I remind them that all members of the Legislature were invited and that all those who made presentations to the Minister of Finance in the countless presentations she received across the province were invited to be present, to directly receive the feedback from the time that they had taken to give her advice on what they thought would work best for the province of Ontario. That's a tough challenge.

In this place, we're bombarded with information all the time. The media always has a spin, always has a story, sometimes not necessarily factual. Sometimes the weight of one issue or another is imbalanced. The hard part for us as legislators is to figure out what really is working, what people are really talking about, to get through all that noise of the radio and the television and the newspaper to what really matters to our constituents. So my view is that every time we have an opportunity to communicate directly with the people of Ontario, whether it's by teleconferencing, videoconferencing interactively, trying something new like a budget speech somewhere else, that's another opportunity to make Parliament relevant.

One of the things we struggle with is that government is very remote and far away from people. There are countless articles written about people who are becoming apathetic about politics, who choose not to be involved for whatever reason. As legislators, I would say it's our duty to constantly find ways to get them involved, to teach them that democracy is alive, that they have a role to play. I think this was another opportunity and an example of the many ways our Legislature has been changing and evolving over the years.

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I think that while we are looking for ways to make the Legislature and the activities we undertake in this place relevant, it's also important when people say, because

you're doing something different, that you are somehow not responsive or respectful of this place, that there's not one person on this side of the House, and I would say across this Legislature, who doesn't come here respectful of this place and of the process. Democracy is very messy. This process is challenging at times, but I want to say that I am very confident we are all in our own way working hard to make sure this place works. That's in the face of citizens who spend their time, as they should, trying to make a living, going about their business, doing whatever they need to do to take care of their families, to take care of their businesses, to make sure their children are well educated, assuming that we are here doing our best on their behalf, although we clearly have some different views about how that should be done. Anyone who suggests anything other than the very best intentions of trying to make democracy relevant, efficient and effective is not speaking out for all of us.

I came to this place from the business world. I also came to this place as a former teacher. As a fairly strict schoolmarm, I will say there are times in this Legislature when I am embarrassed, and I think we all say the same from time to time. It can be very unruly. Things are said in this place that should not be said, and there are times when the temperature is far too hot and when, as a strict schoolmarm, I wish we could stand up and settle things down. There are days when we do not set a good example for the children who come to visit or for the people of Ontario. I would say that is something we all need to work at doing a better job of here in this House.

Decorum is an important thing. People who watch this Legislature on television do not understand how small this room can seem at times, how heated and how passionate we can be in our beliefs and in our endeavours. If we don't behave in a decorous manner and in a polite way, and present our arguments properly, it can come across in a way that I think sometimes translates to people that we're not being respectful of this place and this process, and that is most unfortunate.

I do want to touch upon this point: over the years, how budgets have been presented and how they are transmitted to the public has evolved. One of my colleagues the other day—and I want to reiterate this—mentioned, for instance, how at the federal level in the last budget that was presented, it seemed that almost every item that was mentioned had been leaked so far in advance that when the budget was finally presented in Parliament it was old news. There were no surprises. That is an illustration of how practices are evolving and changing over time. Is it good? Is it bad? We could argue both ways, but it is, and that is to be noted.

The other thing that has struck me—and I listened to some of my colleagues talk about the way finance ministers have or have not made their presentations in the House. In one instance when a finance minister was forced by the antics in the House, within the standing rules of the Legislature, to make his budget presentation outside the House, it occurred to me that if the standing rules are such and properly followed that a Minister of



Finance can be forced out of the House to communicate to the people, then surely it is quite acceptable, quite within the rules, to choose to make a similar presentation outside the House.

I will note that it's important that while some practices have changed, many have not. Our Minister of Finance was very diligent to ensure that the budget was tabled, as it appropriately should be; that the budget lock-up process was properly followed, as it should be. There is every intention that the bill will be fully and properly debated in this place, as it should be; and it will be properly passed, as it should be. There are some practices that it is absolutely essential be followed properly.

I guess one thing that has troubled me about all of this discussion about the budget speech process was the fact that in all the talk about the process, I'm worried the content of the budget didn't properly get discussed. There were some precedent-setting things that occurred in this particular budget—for instance, three-year funding. Municipalities, school boards and hospitals for years have said, "Would you find a method to give us certainty so that we can plan, present our own budgets to our boards and know what our human resources plans are going to be and what new programs may or may not be affordable?" It is this government, in this budget, that for the first time has allowed this to happen in the province of Ontario. I hope it hasn't gone unnoticed that it is this government that is now presenting its fifth balanced budget in a row. That is extraordinary.

I remind people who, before I came to this place, if they think back, remember what budget day used to be like. They'll remember that with trepidation they waited for the 6 o'clock news, because they wanted to know how many and which taxes were going up and by how much. That's what we used to remember budgets being about. Because for ordinary citizens at our businesses and in our homes, budget day meant we were going to get nailed one more time by a government tax of some sort or other. This government has changed that.

This is the government that now lives within its means, has balanced its budget five times in a row, has managed to start paying down the debt—coming into government and following governments who spent far beyond their means and taxed and spent us into deficit and debt—and managed to get this province back on a sound financial footing again.

In this particular budget, it was important to note that our Minister of Finance was able to announce that we have over a million net new jobs created in the province of Ontario. What a difference from when we came to this place in 1995, with 10,000 jobs lost.

There are tax cuts. Some of my constituents still have not come to understand why tax cuts matter to this government. They matter to this government, the Ernie Eves government. To the opposition members, the Liberals and the NDP, tax cuts are bad things. They have not yet come to understand that with tax cuts comes competitiveness; with tax cuts comes the ability to keep your hard-earned money and invest it as you and your family and your business see fit.

**Hon Mr Clark:** It raises revenues.

**Hon Mrs Elliott:** Then comes the opportunity, as my colleague says, to raise revenues. For a ministry like mine, the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, it means the ability to provide new and more services in health, education, social services and all kinds of things that our constituents not only want but, more importantly, need.

For instance, children's programs: it's this government, the Eves government, that is now known worldwide for some of the most outstanding programs for children in the world. That only happened because our finances are sound, because we live within our means, and because we understand that setting the proper financial table allows the economy to grow, to prosper and for us to be able to provide services for our constituents.

The key thing in all of this—and the Minister of Finance was able to outline this in the budget speech—is to set priorities. I talked earlier about how difficult it is to be a legislator, to be able to ascertain what the priorities of the province and your constituencies are, to get through all that noise. We've been very clear on this side of the House. The Eves government understands that priorities like health care, like education, like social services and like the environment are key to our constituents. So that is where the majority of our money is spent and the majority of our resources are focused.

In my own riding, I just presented a cheque to the Wellington county school board, the Upper Grand and the Catholic school board totalling, just for those two boards, \$294 million. In my own community, two brand new hospitals that have been fought over and wished for for years and years have been delivered by this government—delivered because the Minister of Finance on this side of the House understood what a budget was really about. It's not about raising taxes, it's not about penalizing the citizens, but about getting the financial house in order so we can provide the services that people want and need.

1740

I say to you that when we came to this place, we tried very hard to set priorities, to do the right thing, to do business differently in Ontario. We had to make some tough choices. We had to take some measures that were extraordinary. The Legislature has evolved in many ways, but the bottom line is we practice what we preach. Unlike my colleagues across the way, all of us on this side had to fight tough nomination battles in our ridings. On the other side of the House, the Liberals and their leader don't respond to their constituents to choose their member. Oh, no, no. The Liberal leader, Dalton McGuinty, hand picks and makes a decision, slapping the face of the constituents in that particular riding. But never on this side; we believe in democracy and we actually practice what we preach.

In summary, I want to go back to where we started. We are speaking to a motion that is presented by Mr Conway, which says that the assembly must be the first recipient of the budget. I say that is a flawed motion. I



say it might deny a lock-up; it might deny a presentation to the opposition. It doesn't even say that you would necessarily be assembled here in this Legislature, which is interesting enough. I say to you that over the years, just the short period of time that I've been here, many changes have occurred in the traditions of this House that I think have led to greater democracy, to a greater ability for our constituents to understand what's happening in this place, to understand the laws that we are designing to meet their needs. I cannot, in all conscience, support the motion that is presented by the opposition.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I'm sitting here listening to the comments. First of all, it's hard to believe that we're actually having this debate in this Legislature. Let me just read the motion moved by Mr Conway again: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario." Think how hard it is to believe that we're sitting here in the Parliament of Ontario in the year 2003, and we need a motion to affirm the right of Parliament to receive the budget. Think how absurd that must sound to most people who follow the democratic process, who believe in our institutions, who believe in democracy, thinking that we're actually debating a resolution that says that the budget must first be presented to the people of Ontario through this Legislature.

Speaker Carr's ruling is unprecedented for what it says about this government. This ruling is unprecedented, I believe, in the history of this Legislature. The move by the government is unprecedented in the history of the Legislature. The government members, despite their best efforts to try to spin this, are going to say, "Well, but you know Bob Nixon did this, and Floyd Laughren did that." If you look at those situations very clearly, there was not in any of those cases a deliberate political decision made by the government of the day to take the budget outside of the Legislature. The Premier's office and his cabinet felt that they had to reach directly to the people of Ontario, and somehow felt that they could just bypass this institution, that this place didn't matter, that it didn't matter that you just throw out the window the history, the democratic process and the way we work across the province.

We're sent here by the people of Ontario to represent them. This is the place where we do it. This is where we are legislators. We're not legislators in our riding. There, we're MPPs serving our constituents, but in here we make laws, we vote on laws, and we receive, vote on and debate budgets. The budget should have been tabled and presented in this House while Parliament was in session.

Maybe that's part of the problem. If you look at the history of the last eight years—these hard, difficult years for Ontarians—if you look at this government, this contempt is really nothing new. They showed contempt right from day one. One of the first things they did when they took over was change the rules, only for the purpose of ensuring that they could try to muzzle the opposition, try to muzzle debate, try to muzzle how long we can

debate bills in here. These are the folks across the floor who used the rules while in opposition to their advantage, that were there at that point while in opposition. It was former Premier Harris who sat in this House and read from a book every lake and river across Ontario as a filibuster, the same Premier, the same leader of the opposition who for days delayed this place through a filibuster.

What did they do when they came to office? They said the rules were no good any more because it no longer allowed them this unfettered right, this presidential-style right of governance that they love so much. I'm just waiting for the Premier's car to pull up with the seals on the sides and the two flags in the front. Maybe that's the next step, and the seal of the Premier of Ontario in front of the podium. He is so enamoured with the work of George W. Bush that he certainly is doing anything he can to try to imitate the style of George W. Bush and the American presidential style of politics. That is not what Ontario is all about.

This, in my view, was a slap in the face to Ontarians, a slap in the face to this institution, this Legislature and our long, rich history of democracy in Ontario. But again, is it surprising coming from this government? No. This Legislature has sat an average of 78 days per year. This Legislature has sat 21% of the time since this government came to office eight years ago. When they took the recess at Christmas, the House didn't come back till April.

Bills today in this province under the Harris-Eves rule changes are now debated for a shorter period of time than we've seen. They've forced closure of debate on 60% of bills. Think about it, Speaker. Sixty per cent of bills that come to this Legislature this government has forced closure on the debate motion.

How do we put that in context? Let's use 1985 as the example. In 1985, 1% of bills received closure. Think about it. In 1985, only 1% of all the bills in here were passed with closure being invoked; in the last eight years, 60%. It is absolutely astonishing the contempt they continue to show for Parliament.

The members today with their speaking points, with the exception of one who I think went off the speaking notes this afternoon, have continued to talk the government line, why they can't pass this resolution and try to defend the indefensible. I find it interesting that the Minister of Finance went on Focus Ontario and said, on March 29, "Oh, yes, we would do it this way again," and then a few weeks later she was asked by the media, "Would you do it this way again?" She said, "No, looking back at it, I wouldn't do it this way again," and then she denied having made the comment that it was OK.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** She was caught.

**Mr Agostino:** Until she got caught, just like the member today who denied it happening in this House until he was caught.

Clearly, the Premier has publicly made reference to the fact they wouldn't do it this way again. A number of backbenchers have said they wouldn't do it this way



again. As they sit there and continue to say, "No, we wouldn't do it this way again," every single one of those members is going to come in here when the vote is held and vote against this. The message to the people of Ontario is—you guys don't get it. You just don't get this. You don't understand what you have done. By voting against this resolution, what you are saying is, "What we did was OK, and we reserve the right to do it again." That's what they are saying: "We reserve the right to do it again, and we will do it again." That's what they're saying here.

What is wrong with this resolution? What is wrong with saying that this Legislative Assembly has the right as a Parliament assembled to be the "first recipient of the budget of Ontario?" Then we get some of these really flimsy explanations as to why. All of a sudden some brainwave in the Premier's office says, "Oh, well, if we do this, if we approve this, we can't hold budget lock-ups." What a joke. What a joke of an excuse. You've got to be able to do better than that. Those whiz kids have come to up with a better line. It's almost embarrassing that this once great Conservative government in this province is now floundering. They were the best communicators this province had ever seen and now they've gone amok. They've lost it. They're out of control. You look at it and the best excuse you can come up with is that if you pass this resolution that says the Legislature shall receive the budget—which, to most people is, "Yeah, so what's the problem?"—you can't do budget lock-ups. Where do they get that opinion from? I wish they would table the opinion that the Attorney General was given on this budget by the staff, by the lawyers in the department. I also wish they would table in this House the opinion that says they can't do a budget lock-up if this resolution is approved. I would be interested in getting both of those opinions for the people of Ontario, to see the consistency that is there.

1750

This was a huge mistake by this government and—do you know what?—they could have cut this off very easily. Once they realized this had been a mistake, the right thing and the honourable thing to do would have been to stand up and apologize and say, "We meant to do the right thing. The people of Ontario obviously don't agree with us. We apologize to the people of Ontario for the contempt we have shown and we will never do it this way again." That would be the end of it. That would be the end of this issue.

That's why I think you've lost your way. The old government, the Harris-era government, would have understood that. You guys don't get it any more. You've lost touch. That is the problem. They've lost touch with the average person in this province, and it shows. It is the arrogance and contempt of a government that, after eight years of being in power, thinks they're untouchable. It is the arrogance and contempt of a government, after eight years, to think they have a divine right to govern this province forever. It is the contempt and arrogance of a government that feels that once they've crossed election day and received 45% of the vote, they have the right to

do whatever they want, any time, unchallenged, in this province.

It is that contempt and that arrogance that Ontarians have noticed, day after day, and that is why Ontarians are looking forward to an election call. They're looking forward to an election call in this province when the people of Ontario will get an opportunity to respond to this government. The people of Ontario will get a chance to tell this government what they have done and haven't done. Clearly, they spoke out on the budget process—no doubt. I'd be interested in knowing how many calls these members got, because I'm sure they got calls in their offices from Ontarians.

And it wasn't just the people of Ontario, it was the media. The spin for the first few days around here was interesting. The Tory operators in the Premier's office, the communications people, the Tory members, were saying, "Nobody cares. Who cares where we hold this budget? It doesn't matter that we're going to break parliamentary history and tradition here. It's inside baseball stuff. It's just a few reporters, a few academics, and no one else will care." Well, Ontarians have shown this government that they do care.

What was fascinating were the editorials across this province, 68 negative editorials in newspapers across Ontario—unprecedented.

**Mr Kormos:** How many positive ones?

**Mr Agostino:** I didn't see any. Maybe the government can point them out in their comments.

It wasn't just a few newspapers here and there; it went right from small-town papers to large city papers to community newspapers, right-wing-leaning papers, left-wing-leaning papers. It was unanimous—literally unanimous across Ontario.

You have lost touch with the people of Ontario. To sit here and continue to talk about this resolution somehow being wrong or somehow not being appropriate is amazing. Let me tell you, we can debate this for another day or two. Whatever the time, they're going to vote against it. Yes, we understand that. They'll have a majority and they will crush the opposition on this bill. We understand that. You're going to have to defend to the people of Ontario as you knock on their doors why you think it's a bad idea to table and present the budget to the people of Ontario through this Legislature first.

As we get into an election campaign, democratic reform and how this place works and the faith and belief that people have lost in this institution are extremely important. It is important because we have a responsibility to restore people's faith in their Parliament, in their Legislature, in this institution and what we stand for in a democracy. Because, frankly, people's confidence has been eroded. Moves like this—cynical political stunts such as this—add to the erosion. It hurts all of us. It hurts all Parliaments across this country. It hurts all MPPs of all political stripes.

Our leader spoke today. Dalton McGuinty has outlined a plan that is going to reform how Parliament works. It is going to restore some faith in Parliament. We are going to make it relevant again to people in Ontario. We are not



going to play games with election dates. We are not going to allow it. Whether it's three years, four years, four and a half years or five years, it should not be up to the whim of a Premier to decide when he or she wants an election called. We believe that four years from the date of the next election should be the next provincial election in Ontario—simple, clear, no game playing. It does not become a tool to use by the government of the day and an advantage, potentially, to the government of that day. Election dates are not the privy of a political party; they are the tool of Ontarians who go to the polls and decide on the future of their province and their government. Premiers of any political stripe should not have the opportunity to play with that, as has been done across this province over the years.

**Mr Kormos:** You want the Premier to go the full five years?

**Mr Agostino:** That would be scary. Four years is dangerous enough.

We're also going to guarantee Ontarians that budgets are going to be presented in this House. So if Ontarians want to ensure that a resolution such as this is passed, after it gets defeated by the Tories in the next day or two, our platform says that. Our platform says we are going to ensure that Parliament is the first recipient of a budget, through the people of Ontario, as it should be.

We're going to ban what I view to be blatantly disgusting political advertising, paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, to try to benefit the PC Party of Ontario.

**Mr Bradley:** A 28-page insert in Maclean's.

**Mr Agostino:** Yes, as my colleague Mr Bradley reminds me, a 28-page, colour, glossy insert in Maclean's magazine today, which is going to cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars; work to again bring up the level of cynicism in democracy and government and how it works—self-serving advertisement. That is fine if the PC fund of Ontario wants to pay that. You've got every right. You have the biggest fundraising machine in the history of this country, so you've got lots of money stashed away. So if the PC fund wants to pay for these blatant political commercials we see on TV under the guise of public education, of educating the public, or these 30-page glossy inserts in Maclean's, they've got every right to do that. Pay it through your funds or the PC Party's, not through the money and picking the pockets of the hard-working taxpayers in Ontario. They deserve better than that, and they're going to get better than that with a change in government.

In many ways, this ruling, this debacle, this mess that has occurred at the end of the life of this government has gone to show, and in many ways encapsulate, what this government has been all about. It is a fitting end to eight years of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves thinking they can trample the rights of Ontarians, thinking they can step on

people's rights, thinking that this place is irrelevant, thinking that this place doesn't really matter and thinking that the opposition doesn't really matter because the only people who matter are those MPPs elected on the government side of the House. What contempt for democracy. What contempt for Parliament.

There is an insult in what they've done, and they have a chance here to fix that. They have a chance here to acknowledge there was a mistake made and it will never happen again. That would be the honourable thing to do. That would be the right thing to do. That would be what your constituents would want you to do. But instead, they are going to turn around and vote against what I think is a very reasonable, sensible resolution which frankly says, very simply, that the Legislature should be the first to receive a budget. Think about it. Just think about how absurd any other notion would be—and to most Ontarians it is, except to the Tory members of the government.

I urge the members to have the courage of your convictions, to stand up for your constituents, to stand up for the rights of this building, of this institution, of democracy, of Parliament, to do the right thing and to vote in favour of this resolution, because anything short of that would be, once again, in my view, showing contempt for the people of Ontario. It would be, once again, in my view, showing that you totally disregard our democratic process, our history. There is nothing wrong with admitting you made a mistake—absolutely nothing wrong with that. It is the honourable thing to do, it is the right thing to do, and people would actually applaud you and say, "They get it. They finally get it." But do you know what the problem is? They don't get it. They don't understand. They don't believe they've done anything wrong, despite the public outcry, despite the public backlash, they don't believe they've done anything wrong. They're basically saying to the people of Ontario, "We are going to do it again if we want to." But do you know what, Speaker? They're not going to get that opportunity to do it again, because the people of Ontario, whether it's next month or it's in the spring or in the fall or in the spring of next year, are going to make it very clear: this government, as was said by one of the columnists, should not be thrown out of office, it should be hurled out of office.

I'm looking forward to that opportunity, Ontario's looking forward to that opportunity. I ask the members to vote in favour of this resolution. Failing that, have the courage to go to the people of Ontario immediately and let's have an election and let the people decide whether this was contempt of Parliament or not.

**The Acting Speaker:** It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 13 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 13 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### VISITOR

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I could beg the indulgence of the House, I want to let them know that our fine, hard-working page from Marathon, Brian Donohue, has a special guest here today, his uncle Chuck Donohue, who is in the members' gallery. We welcome you, Mr Donohue.

### CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT OUTRAGE AU PARLEMENT

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** Thank you very much, Speaker, for this opportunity this afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity, although I have to tell you it's not a happy time. It's not something I am pleased to have to do, which is to speak here today on the issue of contempt by the government for this place and for the traditions of this House and of parliamentary democracy. It's a disappointing and troubling day, or should be, for all of us in this place to actually have to consider the actions of the government and their disrespect for the natural order of things, the way we develop the public policy and deliver on the responsibility we're all given when we are elected to this place, no matter what our political persuasion, to participate in debate and discussion about things that affect the everyday lives of each one of us, our families, our community members and the citizens of Ontario.

However, having said that and having expressed my displeasure, I also have to say that it really comes as no surprise, because there has been a buildup of things that have happened over the last years in this province that indicate that this government really has no respect or consideration for government and the role of government and the important job of government in a jurisdiction like Ontario to order the public business of the day so that everybody has equal access and equal opportunity. If we lose our respect and support and understanding of the important role that government plays, we sooner than later turn into a system of anarchy where individuals and organizations and groups of people fight with each other over the resources that are available, and eventually those who are most vulnerable and at risk lose out more often than not.

In speaking to my not being surprised, Speaker, I also want to say that I wasn't surprised at your ruling. I've watched you in this place over the last few years as you've acted as Chair of the House and presided over the very important public debate that sometimes breaks out here, I suggest probably to the surprise of the government, which orchestrates it such that there is very limited opportunity for real debate to happen. But when it does happen, you preside in a way that is fair and dignified and professional. I have to say that I admired your courage in the stand you took almost immediately in response to the announcement that we all heard back in our ridings, back at home in our neighbourhoods, to the news that the government was going to bring down a budget and that they were going to deliver it not in this place but in the boardroom or training centre of one of their biggest supporters and benefactors, Magna International.

The fact that you as a Conservative, somebody who was elected to this place carrying that flag, would have the intestinal fortitude and the courage to stand up at that point, and then later when the House came back, to make the ruling you did, I think speaks well to the opportunity we have here to correct that mistake, to say to the government very clearly, "You cannot do that; you cannot act in this authoritarian, singularly focused, arrogant way in front of this House and the people of Ontario and you must in fact follow the traditions, if not the rules, of this place in the things that you do."

The hue and cry that followed or happened at the same time that you made the decision to speak out I think supports the credibility in your stand and the courage that you showed. I don't think there was a newspaper across this province that didn't, in an editorial or in an article of some sort, indicate displeasure and disappointment and dismay with the decision of the government to deliver this bill in the way it did, in the place it did.

It speaks of a government that believes that the public debate, the public policy development that happens in this place should more and more happen, if not in the backroom of the Premier's office and those in power in this day, then in the backroom of some of the bigger corporate interests in the province. That's a problem because it doesn't allow for others to participate; it doesn't allow for the interests of other people to be brought to the fore and placed before the decision-making authorities. So we should not be surprised if at the end of the day it begins to hurt people. The kinds of things we're beginning to see in communities across this province I think indicate very clearly the damage that is caused by this kind of single-minded commitment to doing it your way, come hell or

high water. This sort of arrogant, I-know-better approach is in fact showing itself.

I have to say to you that I was brought to reflect, the day you stood up and we all found out that the government was going to deliver the budget in this way, on my own experience in that chair, sitting there day after day, presiding over public discussion about things that affect the lives of all the people I represent out of Sault Ste Marie, and never hearing anything of a public debate around decisions that affect those who are most vulnerable and at risk in our communities: every other day a new decision being made behind closed doors, a new regulation being made re the services we will provide or not provide for those who are most in need of them, those who are most vulnerable and at risk; every day another attack, every day another raising of the bar, every day making it more difficult, taking away opportunity from those who need our assistance the most.

Anybody who has followed government or understands it or who has a keen interest or love of public discourse and the way that civil society organizes itself will understand that the true measure of any society in the long haul is in the way it deals with and supports and helps out those who are most at risk and most vulnerable within their jurisdiction. This government has shown, almost since the very day it was elected, a total disregard and misunderstanding and almost a dismissive attitude toward those in our community who are most at risk; as a matter of fact, to the point where they've actually turned over the development of public policy and the tools of delivering support to those who are most at risk and vulnerable to the private sector.

1340

We're connecting here this government's decision to release its budget in the training centre of one of its largest corporate supporters with the decision they made very early on in their time in government to in fact turn over the further development of public response to the most vulnerable and at risk of our citizens to a private sector corporation, Andersen Consulting, who since then have morphed into Accenture. We see their tentacles in almost every facet of life now where resources from government are distributed to those who need it and then are collected back in some way over a period of time. So it shouldn't surprise us.

It was the realization in my own mind that that is what was happening back when I was in that chair that brought me to a decision that I could not lend whatever credibility I brought to that position, given that I had worked before I came here as a person overseeing a soup kitchen operation that delivered services to those who are most vulnerable and at risk in my own community and the thought that maybe somebody watching this place might say, "Tony's in that chair. He's a guy that has some history in dealing with the poor, so I shouldn't be too worried about what's going on or how the public responds to the needs of poor people is concerned."

I could no longer lend whatever small credibility or legitimacy was there by my being in that chair any more.

I felt I had to make a statement in a public way, not dissimilar, yet different, to the way you stood up a couple of months ago to say to this government, "This is wrong." I was saying as well on that day that to turn over the delivery of services and programs, resources and support to those people in our jurisdiction who are most at risk and vulnerable to the private sector, to a corporation that has a spotted track record to begin within other jurisdictions where they've been brought in to do that, was absolutely wrong, not in keeping with the traditions and the *raison d'être* for government in the first place, which, I believe, first and foremost, is always our primary responsibility: to look after those things and those folks and those issues among us who are most vulnerable and most at risk.

I have to say that I'm also reminded of the very strong reaction of our leader, Howard Hampton, to the issue of the reordering of the way we're going to manage the hydroelectric system, the electricity or the power system in this province; the sense we got early on that this government was going to, as they've done with the delivery of services to the poor, turning it over to Accenture, turn the generation, transmission and distribution of power and electricity to the people of this province—my constituents, my friends and neighbours, people in all of our constituents across this province, in rural and northern Ontario in particular—to the private sector so that they could charge whatever it is they felt they could get, given the nature of the market out there, without being challenged publicly for in fact doing that.

We know the result. We know it very clearly. The purest face actually of the impact of the privatization and the deregulation of hydro is seen no more directly or obviously than in the town of Wawa. Our leader, Howard Hampton, and myself were up there yesterday to speak to the people of Wawa to get a sense of what was happening to them, how turning over complete control of pricing, distribution and transmission of hydro in the way it has unfolded with the deregulation of hydro to Great Lakes Power has affected very dramatically that community, how they've put them on the precipice of complete and total disaster. There are industries shutting down. A big mill in Dubreuilville has laid off over 100 people because this government has decided to turn over the management of our hydroelectric system, completely and totally deregulated, to the whim of the private sector.

Small businesses in Wawa are closing down. A store in that town that I in fact as a young boy used to work at, used to carry out groceries and stock shelves at, that's been there since almost the inception of that town, has now announced that it's closing down. It was the centre and the core and the very heart of that community, right beside a clothing store that has also announced that it's going to close down, and it was there then too.

It's heartbreaking to go into a town like Wawa and see the impact the decisions of your government are making and how they affect them, how they have become the purest face, the purest example that we can find of the impact of turning over the public discourse and control of



these things that are so important to the everyday life of all of us and our communities to the private sector so that they can make as much profit as they can on it. And to suggest for a second that somehow in the long haul that is going to be good for all of us just flies in the face of the reality, particularly where this small town of Wawa is concerned.

They've been trying to get a meeting with the Minister of Energy for almost a year now, the person who holds ultimate and final responsibility for this, who could make decisions, who could make decisions today to change their lot, to make a difference, to save some of the investments that have been made in that community in homes and in small businesses and in industry so that those folks can look forward to a future in Wawa, in northern Ontario, looking after their children and growing the economy and contributing to the economy of this great province in the way that we who call northern Ontario home have been proud to do for literally hundreds of years. That they're not even able to get a meeting with the minister speaks to the thread that runs through the debate we're having here today about contempt of this Legislature, contempt of the people of the province, not even being willing to meet with the folks who are being most directly and immediately affected so that they can make their argument, so that they can put the issue on the table, so that they can challenge you, Minister, in a way that would help you understand that you need to do something to change this so that these folks can be given back the hope and the optimism and the excitement they used to have in the future that they thought was there for them in northern Ontario and in the town of Wawa.

I plead with you. In keeping with the tone of the debate that's going on here, where I think almost everybody will agree that there has to be more respect for this place, there has to be more respect for the processes and the responsibility that each of us has, you in particular as the Minister of Energy has, for the ordering of the public life, for the delivery of those resources and systems that we all depend on for everyday livelihood, Mr Speaker and Mr Minister.

You begin to put it all together and you begin to see a pattern that, unless it's stopped in its tracks, will literally decimate the governance traditions that all of us contributed to putting in place, that all of us committed long hours and thought and energy to respecting and supporting and building up in this province.

Again, the role you played in that I think has to be held out there, front and centre, and we have to thank you and encourage the courage that you have shown so that others in the same position or with the same opportunity will in fact do the right thing, as you have done in this instance, because if we don't, we will find ourselves going down a road in this province where none of us will have any kind of real say any more.

I remember when I was sitting in your chair one afternoon, debate was going on in the House and there was a vote called. The opposition voted against some-

thing that the government was proposing, and of course they lost, because 99.9% of the time we do in this place, particularly where you have a majority government that's bound and determined to get its platform and its agenda through. The government side then, on a second vote, made the suggestion that, well, it would just be the same vote over, and the opposition stood up and said, "No. We want the opportunity to vote again."

It's interesting. I was listening to the now House leader of the government party, who was, I believe, in the last couple of days so critical of the decision that you made, kind of whisper to the member sitting beside him, "Oh, let them have their vote. It's the only thing they have left." It is, and I felt bad about that. I felt bad for myself and I felt bad for my constituents, and I felt bad for every member of the opposition in this place. It's the only thing you have left: the ability to get up every now and again and vote, to say no to some issues—or support some issues—that this government puts forward. They want to take that away from us. They don't want to allow us to do that any more. They want to deliver more and more of the public policy of this government outside of this chamber. They don't even like the fact that we get, from time to time, a chance to stand up—even though we lose, 99.9% of the time—and say, "No."

1350

The member from St Catharines knows. He has fought in this House, over and over again for years, changes in rules that parties of every ilk have brought forward to diminish the opportunity of members to actually participate in the public debate that must happen here around issues that affect all of us and our constituents.

So, Mr Speaker, I end my few minutes here this afternoon in debate over this issue of contempt of the government for the legislative and governing traditions of this province by again thanking you for the courageous stand that you took. I thank those in the House, in my own caucus and the official opposition caucus, for standing up as well and saying, "No, this is not acceptable. This isn't on. This isn't in keeping with what we need to be doing in this place if we're going to be respectful of the needs and desires of all of the citizens of Ontario out there, to know that their government speaks for them, to know that their government, when considering public business, considers their interests first, and at the end of the day decides in that way on issues that come before us, including things as important as the budget of this House."

**Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food):**

I want to tell you that I'm very excited to have this opportunity to be able to speak, not only to the House but of course to the constituents in my riding of Huron-Bruce. It's a great riding. I feel privileged to be here and I feel privileged to be able to speak on behalf of them in this Legislature.

Let me say that sometimes in politics there are dilemmas. I never want to be a Premier of the province of Ontario, but I think our Premier had a very difficult deck of cards dealt to him a number of months ago. He had



promised the government that he would come out and give multi-year funding to a number of our transfer partners. Coming from a financial background, I appreciate just how important that is in communities, in hospitals, in education and in municipal politics. They need to have a longer-term perspective to be able to make good decisions so that they can move forward. The Premier made that promise, and in so doing he got himself caught in an unfortunate situation. What happened was he said to call the House back together by the end of March—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mrs Johns:** So much for the democratic process, Mr Speaker.

He wanted very much to be able to give these people the multi-year funding that they deserved, and that he had promised he would do. But when he said that he was not going to call the House back, of course there was talk immediately that there was going to be a promise broken. There was no way that, if the House didn't come back, he would be able to deliver multi-year funding. So from that perspective, what we see is the Premier trying to do the right thing in the province of Ontario. He gives the budget to the people who need it the most, the people who need multi-year funding. At the same time, he allows me, in my work as Minister of Agriculture and Food, to travel the province, to consult with the people of the province to make sure that I know what it is they want when it comes to the throne speech, when it comes to the budget, when it comes to important issues in the province. I want to say very clearly that that's exactly what I did. I got in the car, I travelled all across the province and asked farm groups and farmers in the agricultural community and the rural community to tell me exactly what it was that they wanted from this government in the throne speech, in the budget and in our future endeavours. And believe me, they told me.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mrs Johns:** So much for the democratic process again. If they speak louder than me, I will go away.

So what happened was that I travelled to the east, I travelled to the north, I travelled to the west. I hit a lot of agricultural groups in my car, I have to say, and ate a lot of McDonald's on the way, and I learned a lot about what the farm groups wanted and what we should do to set a vision for Ontario that would take us into 2004, 2005, 2006. I guess today my thought is that I should spend some time and thank the people who came out to hear me, talk to me and tell me where the government should go in the future. That's what I did in the time I wasn't in the House.

I can't speak for others, but I can speak for the people I saw in Kemptville and Norfolk, whom I saw in Marcel Beaubien's riding, whom I saw in Powassan. I can speak about those people who came to me and said, "This is what I think the government's vision for the future should be." So from that standpoint the Premier fulfilled two important objectives: he ensured that people got multi-year funding, as he had promised, and he ensured that farm groups in this province and agricultural com-

munities in this province got the opportunity to talk to their minister and tell this government where we should go in the future, and that got incorporated into the documents.

I also want to say that we had a wonderful opportunity—maybe some people take this for granted, but we certainly don't in the riding of Huron-Bruce—to have pre-budget consultations this year in Goderich. At that time we brought together a number of different groups who spoke about the things they would like to see in the budget. I have to tell you that the school boards were there, the hospitals were there, businesses were there, farmers were there, and individuals from the community who just had an idea about where they would like to be; all of them came to Goderich to be able to talk in the pre-budget consultations. Many more wrote to me and talked to me about the throne speech and the pre-budget consultations we did in that particular place.

I want to say there are some people who really went out of their way. From the agricultural perspective, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, under the leadership of Ron Bonnett, talked to us about nutrient management and about the agricultural policy framework we're working very hard on. I had a number of different organizations, from the Christian farmers through to all the commodity groups, talk to me about how we might proceed to have a strong vision for agriculture. I had people in my constituency of Huron-Bruce talk about the wonderful opportunities that come to our community because we're a rural riding and because we're concerned about the future and the vision.

One of the things I'm particularly proud about, and an individual who I think is someone who should be recognized by the whole House from my riding, is Cathy Ritsema. Cathy is a person who works for Alzheimer's. This is an important society that is very close to my heart; I support it almost any time I can. I have an aunt who has Alzheimer's, and it's very hard on her family. So I have been really pleased and thought it was very visionary when the government decided in 1995 that we needed an Alzheimer's strategy and that it would be a program that would focus on and ensure that we did the best we could for people with dementia in Ontario.

Some of the insightful things we've done, both inside the riding and outside: of course we've invested more in Alzheimer's, we've done more research, we've put more drugs on the formulary tied to Alzheimer's. When we're building new long-term-care facilities, the thing we also do is build facilities that work for people with dementia: no corners; rounded walls, walkways that continue to allow them to pace—important things that will help people with dementia to lead lives that we all want them to live. So from that standpoint, it's important that we have strong social programs like our Alzheimer's program, and to get that, we obviously have to have a strong economic pillar in Ontario.

**1400**

I want to say that one of the strong economic pillars in the province is tied closely to something in my riding,



and of course that would be Bruce Power. Bruce Power is an organization within my riding that I am particularly proud of, and this government has made a huge difference in their livelihood. This government, through Bill 35, allowed them the opportunity to come in and run this nuclear generating station. This generating station has done things that were not possible under the old Ontario Hydro. While all three parties were in power, what happened was that four of the reactors at Bruce nuclear were taken out of production. Since Bruce Power has come in to Bruce, which was after 1999, they have been working to bring back two of the reactors, which will be coming back this spring. I've watched them with their timelines, and I've watched the management of this organization make this work.

Believe me, I am incredibly proud of Duncan Hawthorne and his management team, as he has moved Bruce Power to produce more megawatt hours in the province, probably about 1,500 by July 1. That will make a huge difference to the economic engine in the province. It will make a huge difference to energy capacity in the province. It will make a huge difference to the some 3,000 people in Huron-Bruce who work there. It's good for Huron-Bruce, it's good for Ontario, it's good for Canada. We in this House should all be proud of the work we did to allow that to happen when we voted for Bill 35.

I also want to say that in the province of Ontario since 1995, the government recognized that there was a need for communities to decide on investments that should happen in their communities. The government, under Mike Harris, decided that we needed to invest funds in the Trillium Foundation. What we do is—

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You have asked us to deliberate on the issue you've put before us, which is contempt of the House. I'm looking for the government to explain either why they did what they did or to say that they recant. What we're hearing now is a litany of what they did or didn't do while they were in government. Bring them back to order.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** The minister may continue. I know all members have tended to get off a little bit during this debate.

**Hon Mrs Johns:** I'm talking about the accomplishments, obviously, of this government and the important things that have happened in Huron-Bruce, and the consultations that happened with respect to the budget and where the budget has allowed us to go in this place.

I was talking about the Trillium Foundation. Maybe people across the floor don't like the fact that this government has done so many things for local communities. But when you're in your local community and you hear about the Ontario Trillium Foundation, lots of times you don't understand that those are taxpayer dollars that were established by this government to ensure that we have local investments. In my community, that's really important—\$100 million across the province, some of it allocated to our local communities, much of it set aside so

we can have the services we need in rural and urban Ontario.

Let me say that I have some people who agreed to be on this committee for me who would do incredible work. I think about Nelson Robertson from Port Elgin. I think about Harry Thede, who is a farmer and was once the warden of Bruce county. I think about Ellen Connelly, past president of Community Living and past president of the Alexandria Marine and General Hospital. I also think about Mary Ellen Jasper from Goderich, a local volunteer who has active on so many committees. They deserve to have a chance to talk about the things they want to do. They deserve to be able to get an opportunity to talk to us about a vision for the future.

One of the people on the Trillium Foundation whom I know my colleague beside me, Minister Tsubouchi, would really like to meet is Gloria Day from Grand Bend. She was involved in community cultural activities. She has been really instrumental in keeping our local playhouse going, and she works tirelessly to make sure we have cultural investments from the Trillium Foundation. We also have Conny Detzier from Mildmay, who is a farmer and a member of the South Bruce agricultural advisory council.

I heard a lot about how we need to invest in agricultural communities. I heard about why we need to move forward to make sure we do the right things to strengthen agriculture in the province. Of course, as a result of my travelling during this time, when we took the opportunity to speak to Ontarians, that's one of the things I heard.

I also have Bill McGrath from Wingham, who works heavily in the Trillium Foundation and also works heavily in the community. He's president of the Wingham junior C Hockey Club and a member of the Knights of Columbus. I'll tell you, you can't find somebody who volunteers more than Bill McGrath in the town of Wingham.

I've just appointed someone who has asked to be on, and his name is Joe Steffler from Seaforth. I know that he's going to make a very big difference to the community too. He's very tied to his local community, to Seaforth and the surrounding area. I know that without a doubt he will be another person who provides excellent opportunities for my community.

Along with those people who have provided me with excellent advice over my eight years of being here, there are other people involved in different transfer payment agencies who have helped me out. Let me say that Cathy Cove is one of the people who advises me on education on a regular basis. She talks about education a fair amount of the time. Of course, she wants to ensure that kids in rural Ontario have the same opportunities as kids in urban Ontario. She wants to ensure that we have the quality education we need to have to make sure our children can go on to university and do other things. So, from that perspective, I had a chance to hear from her also.

One of the things that's pretty important to the agricultural community and which I've had a lot of talk

about—and when we get back to talking about the bills in the House, I know we're going to move forward very quickly with this bill—is the rural red tape bill. I have a number of farm dealers—and I think about MacGavins in Walton, John Deere in Exeter and many more, some in Bruce too—who have called me and asked that we move the farm implement dealers portion of the rural red tape bill through as quickly as possible because it's an important part of where they need to go in the future to be competitive and to be able to continue the family businesses they have and which they're very proud of.

Sometimes you get great advice from people you don't necessarily expect to get good advice from. I laugh as I say that one of the people who has provided me with the most help when it comes to agriculture over the last little while is Bob Down from Exeter. He has been an inspiration while we've been dealing with tough issues such as the agricultural policy framework and the nutrient management plan. It shows me that many times, people come together and stand behind their MPP, no matter what their political views are, because they think it's important to make a difference in their community and in their counties. So, from my perspective, I want to thank him for the work he has done.

I also want to thank John Maakant for the work he has done. He is the past president of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and has been instrumental in the nutrient management plan. He lives near Benmiller in my riding. He has worked hard with me to ensure that we have the right solutions when it comes to agriculture and the future of agriculture and a vision for agriculture.

So I once again want to say that the time we had when I travelled the province was a time I got the opportunity to speak to these people and to reinforce what they want to say, and I think we did the right thing.

Dale Ratcliffe from Zurich is one of my chicken hatchery people. He has met with me a fair number of times to talk about chicken hatcheries and that business in the province, and he has been a proud spokesman for the agricultural community too.

So there are lots of people who have made a difference. Oh, I don't want to forget one more person in agriculture, and that's Tom Fritz from Chepstow, who has done a lot of work in trying to move the province to new issues when we talk about nutrient management: how we can better find new technologies that will be a vision for us in the future to be able to utilize so we can make the very best decisions when it comes to protecting the environment and our wonderful water assets in the province. He gives me continual advice. I'm very grateful to him and very grateful for his vision.

There's not only agriculture in the riding of Huron-Bruce, of course. Tourism is a very big issue. We have a wonderful resource when we think about Lake Huron. Let me tell you that the tourism industry is growing and strengthening in Huron and Bruce. We have a wonderful trail that goes up through the lake where you can weave through bed and breakfasts, and wonderful opportunities to see agriculture interface with tourism and to see rural

communities at their best and brightest. So from that standpoint, I want to thank Cass Bayley from Hensall for the work that she gives us, and Cam Ivey, the mayor or reeve of Grand Bend, for his vision about where rural communities should go in the future. These two people we should be very, very proud of.

**1410**

I talked earlier about delivering a multi-year budget for hospitals and education and municipalities and why the budget had to be delivered before March 31 so the Premier could keep his commitment on that. I have had extensive talk with Art Ross from Seaforth and Stan Connelly from Goderich, who are on the boards of both of the hospitals. They of course are very grateful that they have the opportunity to know what their budget will be over the course of the next three years. So from that perspective you can see that delivering a budget by March 31 was an important issue in the management of all those organizations who are transfer partners to the government.

I don't want to forget the big businesses in my community, the small businesses in my community, who have come to talk to me. I have aggregate producers, I have Westcast Industries, which is under the capable leadership of Ray Finney. He's the CEO of Westcast, not only from my community, but for Brant, so I think the Liberals should listen carefully, and also for Stratford and many other areas. He's a wonderful person who drives our local community and he makes my community a better place to be, to live and to raise one's family.

I think you can see that admittedly there are some reasons why people may talk about this budget, they may be concerned about this budget, but when the Premier made a decision to give the communities, the transfer payers, the vision about the dollars that they needed for the next three years, that was a very important part of managing the financial resources of this great province that we call Ontario.

I can speak for some of my constituents when they say they are grateful that they had the opportunity to hold consultations, be involved in the throne speech, be involved in the pre-budget consultations. For that, I am very grateful.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** I want to be clear: I rise this afternoon to speak to the amendment to my motion tabled yesterday by my friend the member from Timmins-James Bay.

I appreciate the comments of other members to this debate and I listened with real interest to what the Minister of Agriculture just had to say in her remarks.

I want to, as I deal with the Bisson amendment, reflect again on why I feel so strongly about why we're here having this debate. It is my view about one of the fundamental, if not the fundamental, responsibilities that Parliament has to hold the government to account for what government does, and most especially to hold government to account for the raising of and the spending of public money. We are all here to represent the taxpayers, and the Minister of Agriculture rightly points out that we



have a lot of constituents who will be very pleased to hear the good news about spending on programs that will affect individuals or communities. But I repeat: at the core of our system of responsible parliamentary government is the essential doctrine that Parliament must grant supply. Only this chamber, with duly elected members here, has the ability to grant the cabinet the spending authority that any cabinet requires to do business.

I received in the mail yesterday some information that I think is very material to this debate, and I raise it this afternoon because I think it is information that every member of this Legislature, as a member of the Legislature, must reflect upon as we contemplate the motion before the House and, more important, what it is we are here to do and how we see our responsibilities as trustees for taxpayers, particularly as it relates to the raising of and the spending of public money.

I want to very briefly review the circumstances again of March 2003. It is well-known, I think, by all honourable members that on March 12, five days before we were expected to reconvene for the opening of the spring session, the Lieutenant Governor, on the advice of Premier Eves, prorogued the former session of the Legislature and announced that a new session would begin on April 30, 2003.

On the same day, March 12, the Minister of Finance, Mrs Ecker, announced that she and her colleagues in the Eves government would be presenting the provincial budget outside of the Legislature in a place at that time not yet decided—though we later found out, it would be at the Magna training centre in Brampton on Thursday, March 27—because, the minister said, “The Eves government wanted to take the budget to the people in an innovative and creative way.”

That was done, consistent with Minister Ecker and Premier Eves’s announcement, on Thursday, March 27, 2003, in the afternoon, at Brampton; that was March 27, 2003.

Last night, I received in my parliamentary mail a copy of order in council 769/2003, dated March 26, 2003. This order in council—recommended by Minister Ecker and concurred in by my colleague Bob Runciman, the Chair of cabinet—was signed on March 26, about 24 hours before the so-called “People’s Budget” was presented outside of the Legislature.

What does this order in council, dated March 26, 2003, say? I’ll provide copies to all honourable members. Let me just say, in a very serious way, that getting a copy of this order in council is not easy. I had a seasoned legislative assistant go over to the Cabinet Office this afternoon to see if it was available. Interestingly, order in council 769/2003 is not available on the afternoon of May 13, 2003—what is that, six weeks after it was executed by the provincial cabinet?

Let’s come back—and I say in a very serious way to my friends on both sides of aisle—to the content of the order in council. It says:

“Whereas the Minister of Finance hereby reports that there is no appropriation or provision by the Legislature

for the fiscal year commencing on April 1, 2003 for the general and necessary government expenditures as set out in the” attached “schedule...;

“And whereas the treasury board hereby reports that it estimates that the sums set out in the schedule hereto are the sums required for the general and necessary government expenditures to be incurred by the ministries and authorities for which such sums are shown in the” attached “schedule....

“And whereas the Legislature is not now in session”—and we know why; it had just been prorogued and an announcement for recall had been made for April 30,” but it is observed in the very important and timely order in council dated March 26 that the Legislature is not now in session.

Finally, it observes that: under the Treasury Board Act, 1991, there is a provision for the issuance of a special warrant “where a matter arises when the Legislature is not in session that requires the incurring of expenditures during a fiscal year ... on or after April 1, 2003 for which there is no appropriation by the Legislature;

“Therefore,” we—the cabinet ministers Ecker and Runciman—recommend to His Honour the signing of two special warrants which His Honour did then sign. I want to read what those two warrants provide for.

#### 1420

The first warrant, signed by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, James Bartleman, sometime on the afternoon of March 26, provides for a warrant in the amount of \$73,236,500 for the general and necessary expenditures of four offices: the office of the Legislative Assembly, the office of the Provincial Auditor, the office of the Chief Election Officer and the office of the Ontario Ombudsman—four offices, to receive by special warrant \$73,236,500.

Then comes the second request for and grant of, by special cabinet order, the following warrant: for the sum of \$36,249,948,600—I repeat, a special warrant in the amount of \$36.2 billion—for what? For a spending plan that is contained on one flimsy piece of paper. What does it tell us? It tells us that with the signing of this secret cabinet order—and, as far as I know, it is virtually still secret—we find appropriations in the amount of over \$36 billion, and what are we told? Well, roughly \$16.5 billion is to go to health. For what purpose? Who knows? We are told, to be fair, that most of it is operating. We’re told that community and social services is to get \$4.5 billion; we’re told that education is to get \$4.9 billion. My friends: a special warrant, authorized by the cabinet in secret to appropriate 36 billion, 250 million bucks. That was March 26.

It is well-known to me what the history of special warrants is. I will say quite honestly, in the spirit of this debate which I began some days ago, that special warrants, over the last number of years, have in fact been used with increasing laxity. Eugene Forsey, one of my favourite authorities, in one of his submissions to the Parliament of Canada not that many years ago, raises a



real concern, as have countless Provincial Auditors, the Auditor General for Canada, and a number of public accounts committees, that special warrants are, by their very nature, intended to be for emergency provisions while Parliament is not in session. They are not intended to be, and we as a self-respecting Legislature surely can never let them become, what apparently they became on March 26, 2003: namely, the setting up of what looks like an election slush fund for this government.

Let me just cite what Professor Forsey observed in his testimony to Parliament some years ago: "It should be made impossible," he says, for any cabinet "to drive a coach-and-four through the most fundamental right and power of the House of Commons, its ultimate control over the expenditure of public money."

Well, we have just seen, with this order in council, a coach-and-four, a Mack truck, being driven right through our fundamental responsibility to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent under a set of conditions that are clearly understood, for purposes that are clearly set out in Parliament by a cabinet and approved by Parliament.

I ask you, as you look—this is the spending plan for 36-plus billion dollars. This is it, more than half the budget; \$36.3 billion is about 54% or 55% of the spending plan that Ms Ecker has laid out in other places for the fiscal year that began a few weeks ago. Over 50% of the spending plan is now underway, not with the sanction of Parliament, not with a budget, not with spending estimates, but rather with a secret cabinet order made seven weeks ago on the advice of Ms Ecker, concurred in by Bob Runciman—I don't know how many of the cabinet knew—with this spending plan.

Let me tell my colleagues on both side of the aisle: this is unprecedented. I have checked, in the last 12 hours, and on the basis of my research, the order in council that was signed by the Eves government on March 26, 2003, represents the largest appropriation made by special cabinet order in the history of Ontario, in the history of Canada, and as far as I can tell, in the history of the Commonwealth: \$36,350,000,000-odd dollars. It is unprecedented, and it ought to give this House and every self-respecting member in it real pause. But it gets worse.

Special warrants—we now call them treasury board orders—are intended to bridge a gap when Parliament is not in session. It is May 13 today. We are almost two weeks into the spring session. Parliament is now in session. Where, I ask my friends in the Eves government, is the motion for interim supply? I can't find it on the order paper; it does not yet exist. I tell you, go and find, if you can, order in council 769/2003. Let me just say this to all my friends on both sides of the aisle: it's bad enough that this has been done; it's bad enough that a special emergency provision has been prostituted in this way, but that honourable members of this Legislature should have to go high and low to find this document is even more disgraceful. I challenge you to go and find it. I sent an assistant to where I would normally expect to find it, namely at the Cabinet Office. The last report I got, just a few minutes before I stood up, was that orders in

council up to 769/2003 were there and a number of orders after 769/2003 were there. Conspicuously, this is missing.

I note, for example, that while this was done the day before the so-called people's budget was presented in Markham, the Minister of Finance, who has spoken in this House and outside on several occasions, has not hinted a word of it—not a word of it. Not only has she not hinted a word of it, she has not done her duty as an honourable member representing the crown to come to this place with an interim supply motion. Understand there can be at the end of the day no valid appropriation that you, we as honourable members, do not approve.

Yesterday, my friend Bradley observed that this week's Maclean's magazine has 30 pages of glossy advertising. The Pembroke Observer, the Toronto Star, radio and television are full of advertising about what government is doing. There has not been a word in this place, outside of this place or in any of this government advertising that an unbelievable, unprecedented special warrant, decided at a secret cabinet meeting on March 26, 2003, has appropriated \$36,350,000,000 of taxpayers' dollars for God knows what purposes. You certainly can't tell a hell of a lot by reading this; and not a word in the advertising, not a word here, not a word in the debate.

My friends, I repeat, you are all hard-working, good people. This is taxpayers' money. We have a public duty to account for taxpayers' money.

**1430**

Of course the Minister of Agriculture is right about the good works that you want to do. But there are rules to this game, and fundamental to our rules is that cabinets must come to Parliament with their spending plan. That's what the budget is and that's why you're in trouble for what happened that day, on March 27, 2003. It was at best a faux budget, a show budget. It's not a real budget because it's not a budget legally until the minister stands here in her place and moves the necessary motion: that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of this government. From that motion begins a very critical aspect of our parliamentary liturgy, and in that liturgy the voting of supply is absolutely essential. This is no way to run a railroad.

I'm going to tell you that if I were a taxpayer and I looked at this, it would be hard for me not to conclude that this was not a set-up for the election that surely must have been contemplated back in mid-March, when this strategy was developed. I've been there and I understand the pressures that governments are under as they head into the election cycle. But I repeat: by secret cabinet order, behind closed doors on March 26, on the advice of Ms Ecker and Mr Runciman, the Eves government, in an unbelievable and unprecedented way, appropriated by virtue of a special warrant, now called a treasury order, \$36,350,000,000, representing more than 50% of the spending for this year. That is unbelievable. That's something about which Parliament has to be concerned.

I want to say as I resume my seat, my friends, that if we are prepared to tolerate this kind of gamesmanship,



this kind of outrage to Parliament and our accountability and responsibilities, what on earth are any of us doing here? And I repeat again: why would any bright, hard-working, self-respecting member of any political party work so hard for 35 days to come back here? This is our duty at its core and we are not doing our duty. Support my motion so this kind of activity can stop.

**The Speaker:** In the rotation, the independent member, la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier.

**M<sup>me</sup> Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier):** Merci, monsieur le Président, de me donner l'occasion de m'exprimer sur la recommandation de—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I apologize. We'll start again. If we could just restart the clock; the member didn't have a fair chance.

**M<sup>me</sup> Boyer:** Encore une fois merci, monsieur le Président, de me donner l'occasion de m'exprimer sur la recommandation de mon collègue Sean Conway qui stipule que c'est « le droit indéniable de l'Assemblée législative, rassemblée dans ce parlement, d'être les premiers récipiendaires du budget de l'Ontario. »

J'aimerais vous féliciter de la façon de laquelle vous avez pris vos responsabilités face à l'indignation soulevée par mon collègue Sean Conway au sujet de la lecture du budget le 27 mars dernier, lecture faite en dehors de cette Chambre.

Je tiens d'abord à féliciter le Président de cette assemblée d'avoir eu le courage de se prononcer sur ce sujet épineux.

To adjudicate a contentious item, an issue, requires courage and impartiality. It requires knowledge and independent thinking. It requires an ability to consult and seek out information. I believe that you, Mr Speaker, have given this House an example of the role of the Speaker at its best. On behalf of all Ontarians, especially the constituents of Ottawa-Vanier, I thank you.

Je désire aussi féliciter mon collègue Sean Conway, qui a soulevé le point en demandant au Président de se prononcer.

It is thanks to the Liberal member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke that the issue was placed before this House and that the Speaker was asked to make a determination as to the appropriateness of the manner in which the budget was presented. I think, and I believe it is clear, from all that has been said and from the ruling of the Speaker, that there indeed has been a contempt of this Parliament. The budget, from the beginning of our parliamentary process, has been presented first to its members assembled in the Legislative Assembly. We are the elected ones. We are the ones responsible to the people. We have the duty and the responsibility to react on behalf of the taxpayers of this province. That right has thus far been denied.

Que ce soit inconstitutionnel ou non, le fait demeure que le premier ministre a rompu avec une tradition qui date depuis le début du Parlement ontarien. Un des principes fondamentaux de notre système parlementaire veut que les propositions des dépenses et de taxation publique

soient présentées d'abord aux membres élus de la province. À titre de membre élu de ce Parlement, j'étais offusquée, même fâchée, de voir supprimer ma responsabilité première envers mes commettants et mes commettantes et mon droit de questionner le budget en leur nom.

My constituency office has been swamped with letters, memos, telephone calls and e-mails objecting to the high-handed manner in which the budget was presented to a chosen, restricted group of corporate associates and Progressive Conservative supporters. I have been asked repeatedly to intervene, to bring pressure to the House and to make sure that future budget presentations be made in the appropriate manner that our democratic process requires and demands. I was so appalled that Premier Eves chose to present his budget outside the Legislature that I even wrote to my local papers to decry the gesture. What an insult to the democratic process. What an abuse of power.

As the Speaker has so ably stated, it is the undisputed right of the Legislature to be first to hear the budget presentation. The Eves government deliberately chose to circumvent the established process and has been found in contempt of Parliament. It would be only fair for Premier Eves to rise before this House and admit the error of his government. But believe me, I'm not sure and I'm not willing to hold my breath waiting for that to happen.

Autant que je voudrais bien entendre M. Eves admettre son erreur afin que nous puissions avancer, clore ce débat et passer à d'autres questions, je ne suis pas certaine d'entendre des excuses de ce parti.

I really believe that we had a healthy debate on this issue. Many of us from all sides of the House have had an opportunity to express our opinions. Some of us have agreed with you; some have not. Some have been more expressive than others. Some of us even had the chance to congratulate others for being number one on the debate. I do believe that this matter has been discussed long enough. It's time to vote on this motion and get back to the business before us.

1440

The important thing for all of us, and for the government in particular, is to acknowledge the mistake and make sure it does not happen again. Let there be steps taken so that all future budgets are presented as they should be, in the proper manner: respectful of tradition, respectful of all elected members and respectful of the parliamentary process established in the province of Ontario.

Que ce soit une leçon et que jamais plus, ni les membres de cette Assemblée, ni les citoyennes et citoyens de cette province ne soient assujettis à un tel outrage de la part de notre gouvernement.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The government House leader has the floor.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** With some help, I think I'll try and set the record for the government with respect to special warrants. Again, I was very—

**The Speaker:** Order. All members were very quiet for the member for Renfrew, so I'd ask for the same co-operation for the government House leader.

Minister?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Government House leader. I promise I won't heckle myself.

Special warrants have been around forever. It's a process that reeks of some kind of dial-up indignation. All governments pass special warrants. They all did. The NDP I think sat for a very brief period of time in the last year of their mandate.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Three weeks, was it? They practically operated permanently on special warrants. Again, the word "secret" comes out. First, let's get something clear: an order in council is posted across the street on the sixth floor, a public document—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Again, the member was very co-operative when listening to the member for Renfrew. I think it is only fair that he have co-operation. He's trying to make some points. The member for Renfrew had an opportunity to do it, and in this place we listen to all members.

I know we all would like opportunities to shout out at the other side. But, to be fair, the government members did listen very quietly to the member for Renfrew and I think the government House leader deserves that same co-operation.

It is very difficult, when you're talking about an issue like this, to have people yelling that close. I would ask all members to please give the co-operation to the government House leader that he gave to the member for Renfrew.

Sorry again, Minister.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** OICs are public documents. OICs are posted and all members, all of the public will get an OIC. They can see any OIC. OICs—orders in council—are public documents. So let's discount this secrecy thing. It's impossible to have secrecy regarding an order in council. So let's start with that.

The second thing we have to discuss is special warrants. All governments pass special warrants. I was in the process of explaining that during the last year of the mandate of the NDP government they sat for a very brief period of time—three weeks, I think. They operated almost exclusively on special warrants because they needed to have them in order to continue the business of the government.

That's a fundamental understanding of special warrants: to continue to do the business of the government. It is in order to pay the employees.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I appreciate that. I'm trying to help you.

It's in order to run hospitals; it's in order to run schools and pay teachers. We all operated on special warrants at one time or another.

Now the question you ask yourself is, "OK, you get special warrants. How do you then go about qualifying

special warrants? All the members of the House will know that there are processes to qualifying special warrants—interim supply, for example. You all know very well that last June in every sitting there was an interim supply motion filed and debated, thereby giving you the authority to spend that money during those periods of time.

We had an interim supply debate last June. You can only have it when you sit. So you pass an interim supply practically every session that you sit—every session. Generally speaking, to the members opposite, it's done near the end of a sitting rather than the beginning—generally. Lots of times House leaders try to negotiate consent for interim supply. Very rarely do they get it—I don't think we ever got it—but sometimes they do. That's how you qualify your special warrants, through interim supply.

How does interim supply work with respect to special warrants? To my friend across the floor from Renfrew—I know he knows this—if you've sat on this bench for any period of time in your life, you'd know that you have orders in council for special warrants.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** Thirty-six billion.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I say to the member opposite, you have no idea of the numbers and levels of special warrants that have been passed in the past.

**Mr Patten:** Sixty per cent of the annual budget.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** All kinds of them. Is it the largest in a whole number? Probably. As a percentage of the budget? I'm not sure; we're looking into that. I don't know, because a percentage of a budget—there were special warrants passed when I was in this place and we weren't in government that were fairly substantial. The reason we didn't argue with them was because you debate special warrants through processes—interim supply—and then you must have a budget motion that's filed.

It's funny you guys should talk about that. The reason we're not debating the budget motion that was filed is because of the Speaker's ruling. It's on the order paper. It's there to be debated. It's the first order of business. Why are we not doing this and are listening to the dial-up indignation is because we are caught in this situation of debating Mr Conway's motion. That's on the order paper.

So we have three things I've tried to get across at this time. First, everybody passes special warrants; everybody, every government, has passed special warrants, practically operated on special warrants for a whole year. Secondly, you get interim supply to debate those special warrants that are passed as orders in council. Thirdly, orders in council aren't secret; they're posted; anyone can get them. Fourthly, you've got to file the budget motion, which is filed and which will be debated. We are debating the budget motion as soon as humanly possible. Why? Because when you have a throne speech, you have to finish debating the throne speech before you can go to any other government business. The next order of business is the budget debate, as normal.



**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** No kidding. We didn't know that. Thank you.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You're more than welcome.

That's not all. This is how the process works.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** OK, what happens next, I say to the member. What's the next order of business after that?

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I thought so. The next order of business—and I'm sure you'll know this after I tell you—is that estimates must be tabled. The estimates are tabled and you debate the estimates. They can be debated in committee and get reported to the House. Estimates are debated. That is also a process to deal with special warrants, which you all passed and in which you all followed exactly the same process.

It is truly dial-up indignation. It is truly a speech, I will say, that reeks of newness, reeks of a process that was just brought to this member's attention. But the reality is this member knows exactly how special warrants work and knows exactly how governments are held to account for special warrants. There are many ways to be held to account. I say to members opposite, before you convince yourselves this is some kind of secret, nefarious process—

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** It is.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I'm sure the member for St Catharines thinks so; he still finds Communists under rocks.

But before you think this is some kind of nefarious, secret process, check your standing orders, check the Legislative Assembly Act, check all those bills we passed and all the standing orders we work under that hold the government to account on how they can and cannot spend money.

**Interjection:** This one wasn't available.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I hear the member saying, "This one wasn't available." I say to the member opposite, if you didn't think it was available, it's only because you didn't know how to get it. All you have to do is go get the OIC that's passed.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** It wasn't there.

1450

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You said that on the last OIC when I was in this place that you said was secret. I walked across the street, went up to the fourth floor and it was posted, right there—a secret document posted on the bulletin board for everyone to read, including the fire evacuation plan and who was in charge on that floor and all the OICs you could want; and they said it was a secret.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** They said it was a secret. Now they're telling me special warrants and orders in council are secrets, even though you have to do interim supply, budget motions, debate of the estimates, go through all those processes to deal with interim supply, of which we have the budget motion filed. We will have interim

supply debated this session, and we had the proper processes, through the OICs, in place. And all of you, in your previous incarnations, if there were incarnations during government times—

**Mr Patten:** It's not available.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I say to members such as Patten—and Ramsay would have been there, Kwinter would have been there, Curling; I know Ruprecht was there.

**Interjection:** Cleary.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Cleary, you were there. You all passed special warrants. You all did exactly the same thing.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Oh, yes. You did. You all did OICs. You all posted the OICs. You all had interim supply debates. You all had budget motions filed. You all had estimates tabled. You all went to committee and debated those estimates. You all did this in government. And suddenly, today, you didn't know any of this stuff. Suddenly it's a big secret, special warrants. Suddenly, "I don't know anything about how this place works. I just found out that the government passes special warrants and we have interim supply debates and we have estimates committees. Wow. I found late-breaking news: the government passes special warrants."

**Mr Bradley:** A brown envelope.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You've got brown envelopes, I say to the member for St Catharines. You could have gone to your library and got them. That's all you had to do.

**Mr Bradley:** We looked.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You didn't look. Don't tell me you went to the library and looked, member for St Catharines. I don't believe that for a second. You couldn't even tell me where it is, let alone that you went there and looked. So, pardon me.

**Mr Duncan:** It's just a big joke.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Well, to some degree it is a big joke. I really do find this somewhat offensive. It is a big joke.

**Interjection:** Why is it a big joke?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Why? Because this is how we've done business for decades. This is how we've done—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** The standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, yes; you should know this. Estimates for the budget—Chair. Oh, here are the guys who would even talk about how this would work.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Thank you so much, Newman.

These are the guys who would talk about how this would work. They would actually be on the estimates committee, analyzing, going through—guess what?—special warrants. We've got the Chair. Wasn't this surprising? Do you know what? The Chair is Gerard Kennedy, a Liberal. Alvin Curling is a member. Steve Peters is on there.

So as long as you've been here, you've gone to the estimates committee—for, in some instances, 10 years,

and in Mr Curling's case probably up to 17 or 18 years. You've gone to estimates committee and you've been debating special warrants for 18 years.

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane):** Because we knew about them. This was secret.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** How was it secret? My God. Eighteen years you've been coming to this place, 18 years you've been talking about special warrants at committees, and today you rise up and you're surprised that we passed a special warrant.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** No, it's the amount.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Oh, hold it. First it's a secret. Now I've got a new angle from the member for Kingston. First it's a secret, then they decide, "OK, that's not working, because it can't be a secret. We sit on committees. We sit in the House. We debate interim supply. We do estimates. We have the budget motions filed. We do all the supply bills. So it's not a secret. Oh, it's a lot." Well, it's a lot.

The argument can be put—I would bet money that when the NDP were in office for that year they operated almost exclusively on special warrants—almost exclusively. I bet you almost all of their spending was special warrants because they didn't sit in the House to get the budget passed or the estimates approved.

Furthermore, I will guarantee you that Mr Nixon, who was the finance minister; Mr Bradley, the Minister of the Environment; Mr Conway, House leader and Minister of Education; guarantee—Ramsay was in there for a short time. He used to be with you guys. Then he got over there, and then he went into cabinet. You know this. You passed orders in council for special warrants. You did.

**Mr Gerretsen:** That's not the issue.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Apparently, every time we make a point that says—this is dial-up indignation, because you said it was a secret. We all know it couldn't be a secret. Then you say it's the amount. Then I talk about the amount, and you say, "That's not the issue." What's the issue? The issue is, if the entire thrust, if this is—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** The point is, that's not true. Don't you get it, member for Kingston and the Islands? You could pass every penny through a special warrant if you like. Every last nickel can be passed through a special warrant. That matters not. You still must file all the appropriate motions and all the appropriate bills. You must pass interim supply. You must debate estimates. You must do all of those things, even if every nickel, every last nickel, the government spent is spent through a special warrant. You get out of nothing. There isn't one process, one responsibility, one thing that you can avoid by passing a special warrant. Nothing. You still have to come to the House to debate it. You still have to go to committee. You still have to get your interim supply. You still have to file a budget motion. You still have to debate it in this House. This is synthetic indignation.

*Interjection:* Again.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Again. This is synthetic indignation. This is you people discovering North America in

1975. That's what this is. It is. Honestly, it is. You people are saying that you've made some amazing discovery. You've told the world that you've split the atom. Guys, it was split before.

I don't mind discussing this motion with respect to the motion on Conway's thing; I don't mind that. But standing in your place today and talking about special warrants as some kind of amazing new discovery, that this government somehow subverted the process—everybody has passed special warrants. This is the process. This is what you do. We didn't do a darn thing differently. It wasn't a secret; it's posted. Every OIC can be found. Let's get back to talking about the motion that Mr Conway filed. Let's get away from this synthetic, dial-up indignation because you believe you've just discovered North America.

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** I'm pleased to join the debate on this motion. I just want to give a warm welcome to the students from Rosedale Heights School of the Arts and especially to their teacher, Frank Rioux, who used to spend more time around this place.

If ever anyone needed an example of dial-up indignation, they just got a 17-minute tape of it from the government House leader, frothing at the mouth trying to indicate something that, in point of fact, he was wrong about. He's part of a government that has not yet come to terms with the facts that are before them. The fact is that the \$36-billion warrant, with one page of backup, stands out as just one further piece of evidence about the extent to which that government was involved in a manipulation designed to circumvent the legislative process. That is the essence of why we're involved today in this debate.

I want to start by saying that this place means something to me. When I was a kid, I sat in that gallery when the David Peterson government was here. I thought to myself that this is a place that someday I wanted to be. Later on in the life of that government, I had the honour of sitting in those chairs just behind the Speaker's dais, where I served as a note-passer to David Peterson and cabinet ministers during question period.

**1500**

When I came to this place after my election in June 1999, I felt a certain sense of delight at the prospect that I would have the opportunity, on behalf of 115,000 or 120,000 constituents in the great riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, to be their voice, to be their representative, to bring their issues to the Legislature. But instead what we've been faced with by a government that I think no longer has the requisite amount of respect for their own individual roles as MPPs and for their role collectively as a government has been the really disheartening reality that a budget, one of the most significant, if not the most significant, things that occur in this place, would be taken from here and turned—the government House leader used the word "synthetic." If there was a better word to describe the environment the government chose to move that budget speech to, it was to a synthetic environment, an environment that was contrived and an



environment that had but one purpose, and that was to give the government an opportunity to manipulate the process in a way that this place no longer seemed to serve well enough for them. If we can make decisions that are that expedient, that hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition can be so easily overthrown for the sake of the need to get a good media hit, then I think that's a sad statement about the extent to which members in this place value their own role and their own commitment and their own responsibilities to their constituents.

I have a bit of a motto. In Toronto Centre-Rosedale, we like to say that we practise politics with passion. We do that in part because sometimes it excuses the wild excesses of our rhetoric, but mostly because we like to demonstrate to our constituents—and in my riding I'm talking about people who have come from every corner of the earth, who reflect every face that is on the face of the world, and in many of those cases we take seriously the responsibility to teach them about democracy. In my election training process, we're training people in six languages. But we're not just training them to go and knock on doors; we're giving them some education, some information about our democracy.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Smitherman:** What do we have to show them from this spring in the Ontario Legislature? We have a government loaded with members just like that one, who are quite content to see their own power, their own role and their own voice usurped and diminished by the powers that be. Regrettably, in that government the powers that be no longer reside in those benches, save but one or two. They reside in the polling and communications firms that dot the landscape of downtown Toronto. This is no longer a government. It's a polling operation with a communications arm, and these are some of their agents. They stand in their places and read the scripts that have been produced for them in all kinds of faraway places.

But today, and in the course of this debate, we have an opportunity, and I'd encourage members to seize upon it. It is from the wise words of Sean Conway. We can learn a lesson that can help us all—not just them and not just us but all of us—to recapture before it's too late some sense about the important role this place can play and the important role that we as MPPs within it can play.

I'm offering myself for re-election in my riding. I'm 39 years old. These are the best years of my life in terms of my energy and my experience, and I have very little interest in spending that kind of time, with the commitment we all make to public life, working in an operation where my voice can be so easily ripped from me, where my responsibility to speak on behalf of the 115,000 or 120,000 constituents in Toronto Centre-Rosedale can be so easily taken from me, that the government can choose to move a time-honoured and essential element of our role and put that in a TV studio somewhere.

Sean Conway's legacy, despite the fact that some people don't like to hear the words, will be to show us a different way, a different route, a different opportunity

and to remind us before it is too late that this place is losing its relevance. And there can be no doubt but that that is the case.

This is not a warning that he offers only as he makes maybe his last stand as a parliamentarian. This is something that through the course of his time in office and through the course of the time that I've had the honour of sharing a table with him in a caucus room he has reminded us of: what this place was like in 1975, when he first arrived here; and of the challenges that have occurred over time, where one after the other down a slippery slope this place has been changed by successive governments, and following too often on the heels of governments operating in other parliamentary jurisdictions. But if we do not stand and fight that fight, then we are really bringing into serious question why we want to be here.

I want to be here because I can play a role in connecting the constituents in my riding to what happens in their government. The member from Scarborough East has that delightful smirk on his face. I don't know what his role is. But I know that I work to animate communities, I work to educate communities and to be involved with them and to fight for them. That member, we don't know why he's here.

I want to talk about a commitment of the political party that is led by my leader, Dalton McGuinty, to re-establish our commitment to democracy. If 50% voter turnout is anything, it's the share price of politics, and it is the public's reflection on the value of the work we do and the relevance of the work we have. Our party stands and says that 50% is not good enough for those of us who aspire to political office, for those of us who have passion for government and for assisting people, for those of us who believe in democracy. Why would we stand still in face of a number like 50%, which says that only every second person thinks it's important to vote in a provincial election when issues like health care, education, the environment, how our kids live and grow and how disabled people live in our society—if only 50% of people are voting—are the issues that are at stake? What is that a sign of, and what are we doing about it? From the government we got the answer: "We're doing all that we can to deliver a fatal death blow to the quality of our democracy in this province."

As I stand on this motion, I want to say that the clarion call goes out from Sean Conway and that we, as parliamentarians, have a responsibility to listen to that message and to ensure that it does not fall by the wayside.

I want to spend just a little bit of time talking about some of the commitments the political party that I'm part of makes toward policies for good government.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Smitherman:** I hear the moans and groans from the member from Timmins.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Smitherman:** Perhaps it was the member from Beaches-East York, then.

I've had a lot of respect for the work that other people have done in this place, talking about proportional representation and doing what we can to make sure all of the voices that are out there are heard. My riding is one of those ridings that provide an awfully good glimpse of the fact that unanimity does not often come, a riding so diverse by any measure—by sexual orientation, by ethnicity, by income level, by the nature of where one lives. My riding is a diverse place. We want to talk about re-establishing a government that works for you.

One of the things I've had an awful lot of opportunity, thanks to this government, to talk about is fixed-date elections. When you look at the issue around that warrant—\$36 billion, with one page of backup—that is part of a manipulation which is all around, trying to make sure the government gets the most advantage out of its current right to set election dates.

1510

I want to say that the government has helped us immeasurably in making our case to the people of Ontario about taking the date of election calls out of the hands of government. I think that in this coming election, watching how this government has operated around election calls will make that policy a very, very successful one for our party and, more importantly, a successful one for the quality of our democracy.

We want to introduce technologies that will enable more people to vote. We want to look at increasing voter turnout by 10%.

The government opposite is a money-raising machine; at least they used to be.

**Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora):** Not any more.

**Mr Smitherman:** They used to be. We saw the wheelbarrows being wheeled up to the various leadership contestants hardly more than a year ago. The money in Ontario politics is something which has to be brought back under control. Loopholes so big that you could drive through the very same Brink's trucks that were rolling up the dough to Ernie Eves's campaign have no place in Ontario politics, and we need to bring some order to that.

With respect to partisan government advertising, today in Maclean's magazine we have a government that buys 30 pages of advertising. The backs of letter carriers are being broken as this orgy of government spending—

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues):** Oh, don't overdo it.

**Mr Smitherman:** You carry 1,200 glossy pieces from corner to corner. You haven't been out on the streets long enough to know that you're breaking the backs of letter carriers with the sheer weight and volume of the partisan government advertising you're making the taxpayers pay for, and it's unconscionable.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Smitherman:** There's no picture of the Prime Minister in there.

It's unconscionable, Madam Minister, that you sit there in your place and heckle, because you see the cash-

deprived colleges and universities which could benefit from the more than a quarter of a billion dollars you've spent on this stuff.

We want to have voting reform that re-encourages full public debate. We want to take a very hard look at whether it's time for the overhaul of our voting process in this province, to encourage more people to vote and to participate in this election. We think that encouraging a debate among people is a good thing and that, on the quality of our voting system, it's our responsibility to give people an opportunity through referendum to make some comment about that.

We think that in a healthy parliamentary environment, members of provincial parties and government parties should have the opportunity to offer more criticism of their own government's policies. Last Thursday, here in this House, we got yet another example of the extent to which the mentality exists around here that disagreement on any point is a sign not of strength but of weakness. Some members of our party divided on an item in private members' hour last week. There were two different points of view about a bill, and this was met with some—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Smitherman:** You're so rarely talkative. It's so nice to have you today.

On those sorts of issues, we should be encouraging MPPs to bring forward their views and the views of their constituents and to divide. We think that division or differences of opinion are a sign of strength, not of weakness.

We want to bring in legislation which says that cabinet ministers have a responsibility to be here during question period. In the standing orders, it's not appropriate to raise the attendance of any member, but Mike Harris is no longer here. When I first sat in that seat and came to this place—I remember when I worked for David Peterson. When I worked for David Peterson, on those very rare days that he missed question period—because his attendance rate was over 80%, and I've got the stats for you—he'd phone in and see what happened.

Then I came and took a look at the stats and saw that we had a Premier in this province who came to work about every third day. That was a very ample demonstration of his commitment to accountable government in Ontario. He would not be here and be held accountable, but we held him accountable in the end and he ran. And when we brought forward legislation that would have made it incumbent upon government members and ministers to hit a certain target or have their pay docked, they voted against it because accountability is good for everybody else but it's not so good for them. They've got their own judges and juries, and apparently those are just pollsters.

We think that public hearings on significant government legislation should not be something to be wrangled out by the opposition, wrangled out of government by some big concession. Public hearings are opportunities for MPPs to get out there and hear directly from people about legislation that is before the House. We think that government needs to be more transparent.



Earlier, we listened to a 20-minute speech by the government House Leader that looked a little bit to me like a dog chasing its tail. He worked very, very hard to say that of course these orders in council are not secret. They're pinned up on the wall over across the way on the fourth floor in the Whitney Block. The point of fact is, on the issue of the \$36-billion warrant raised by my friend the member from Pembroke, that order in council was not publicly available. We need a government that, when it's spending \$36 billion of taxpayers' money, is not afraid to be clear about that.

So as my opportunity to participate in this debate winds down, let me say that as someone who first ran for office in 1999 and who will be present again when the government has the courage to go to polls, I want to be part of a government, and I believe that I will be, that makes a commitment to restoring the quality of our democracy here in the province of Ontario. We send a signal to the people of Ontario that we take ourselves seriously: that we will not stand idly by as some pollster-contrived idea goes out of control. Instead, we will find our voice and we will rise up and say that this place is relevant and that for it to be relevant always, we must be dedicated to the task of making it so. Sean Conway, the retiring member from Pembroke, has shown us the way. I encourage government members who believe in their own roles and responsibility to vote in favour of the motion, as I will.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** As I begin my remarks this afternoon, I want to go first to the comments that were made by the government House Leader. I guess in the beginning, I would say that maybe some others appreciated the civics lesson about how the place operates. I've been here 15 years and I don't think I really needed much of a lesson in civics today. But I guess, Speaker, if I were in the position of the government House Leader, I would want to be avoiding the contempt that you have said the government has dealt with too. I would be doing everything I can to talk about everything but the fact that you found this government in contempt with respect to its off-site presentation of the budget in the infomercial, the dog-and-pony show that went on at Magna Corp.

Secondly, if I was in his shoes I would probably want to avoid what is the more important issue that arises from the warrants themselves. The most important issue for me that arises from the warrants is one that the government members have tried to hide behind in dismissing the contempt. That is to say, "The Premier said that the House was coming back and the budget was going to be tabled."

The excessive amounts in the warrants make it really clear that the Premier had no intention of bringing this House back. The Premier had no intention of having a throne speech; the Premier had no intention of bringing us back to table a budget; the Premier had every intention, after the dog-and-pony show up at Magna, to call the election.

1520

The Premier has tried to play the media and the public and his backbenchers and you, Speaker, and the rest of us

as fools by trying to tell us otherwise. March 26: Mr Runciman and Madam Ecker signed a warrant in the amount of \$73 million to fund the operations of the Provincial Auditor and the Legislative Assembly and the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. That amount is \$73 million. Now, I know, because I sit on the Provincial Auditor's committee, that a big chunk of that was not going to the operating budget for the Provincial Auditor, and I suspect a big chunk of that was not going to the Ombudsman or to the Legislative Assembly. The majority of that \$73 million was going to the Chief Electoral Officer because that's where we were going after the dog-and-pony show up at Magna.

It's clear: \$36 billion, one page, not very clearly outlined what that expenditure was going to be for in terms of very precise programs. It's clear. The government was setting up a slush fund. The government was going after the dog-and-pony show. The government had absolutely no intention of recalling this assembly or of presenting a budget in this place. Frankly, that's what I think the importance of the special warrants really demonstrates to us: that the Premier was trying to play everybody for a fool, that the Premier said one thing to the media, to his backbenchers, to you, Speaker, and to the public, but behind the scenes, to a couple of his cabinet colleagues, he was doing and setting up something very different. His members signed warrants for huge amounts of money that were directly attributable to an election that was going to be called. He told us one thing publicly and was doing something different with his cabinet colleagues. That's not terribly honest, in my opinion. That demonstrates to me the clear contempt that the Premier has—not just with respect to having the budget off-site, up at Magna—but the contempt that he displayed for Ontarians when he told them, on the one hand, "Don't worry, the Legislature will be recalled," and on the other was giving clear direction to the Treasurer of this province and a second cabinet minister to sign warrants that clearly were leading us to an election—not a month or two down the road, but right after the dog-and-pony show up at Magna.

I think that's what people should be so incensed about with respect to the warrants. That's what they should really be concerned about: that the Premier of the province could so glibly and flippantly say one thing to the public and to his backbenchers and to members of this assembly and to the media, and so clearly be doing something so completely different behind the scenes. He had no intention of bringing this House back in order to table the budget here, none at all. That's clear with respect to the timing of those warrants and the amounts of those warrants as well. I think the Premier should be apologizing to the public today for being not so very honest about what his intentions really were.

So for all of those government members who've been trying to use the argument in this place and outside that it wasn't really contempt because the Premier said very publicly, and he did, that the budget was going to be tabled: well, don't use that argument any more, friends,

because it's clear from the existence of the special warrants and the amounts that the Premier wasn't telling his backbenchers the truth either when he was dealing with this very matter. I think that's regrettable.

Speaker, I'm sorry. I should not have said that. I apologize. I withdraw.

Let me go back to reading on page 10 of your response to the motions themselves. This is what you said:

"When the government or any member claims that a budget presentation is needed outside the House well before it happens inside the House in order to communicate directly with the people or because of a perceived flaw in the parliamentary institution, there is a danger that the representative role of each and every member of this House is undermined, that respect for the institution is diminished, and that Parliament is rendered irrelevant. Parliamentary democracy is not vindicated by the government conducting a generally one-sided public relations event on the budget, well in advance of members having an opportunity to hold the government to account for the budget in this chamber."

That is exactly what the government was up to. The worst part of it is that it was something that was so premeditated. It was something the government was so interested in doing. It was something the government was clearly intent on having happen, despite the very public criticism from the get-go, from the first day the Premier announced his intention not to recall the House and to have the budget outside this place. There have been a number of references to editorials that were very negative from newspapers that are generally very supportive of this Conservative government. Even they thought something was wrong.

I know that I got calls and e-mails, and I know that Conservative members got calls too, despite what Mr Wettlaufer said in this House yesterday. I remember an article that was published in the newspaper and Mr Miller, who is here today, talking about how many people were coming and complaining in his office about the government's intention to hold the budget off-site and not have it when the Legislature was in session. But the government clearly, even after hearing that criticism from some of the very papers that are generally very supportive of this government, just continued down the same path.

The Minister of Finance, in a press release on March 12, stated: "The Eves government will change the way budgets are presented in Ontario."

Well, they surely did that.

"Janet Ecker, the Minister of Finance, underscored the point when she acknowledged that, while past finance ministers have gone outside the chamber to present budgets due to a parliamentary filibuster or leak," and I quote Mrs Ecker, "What is ... important is that this, the actual initial communication of this to the public will occur outside the Legislature. That has occurred in some circumstances before," but "not in this kind of circumstance...."

The government was way down the road in thinking this was okay and not understanding the problem, and

frankly not caring about years and years of parliamentary tradition just being swept right under carpet—thrown out the door—because they were more interested in a public relations exercise than they were in bringing the budget here.

The government had time. When the government initially talked about its intentions, when the Premier talked about the infomercial and what was going to be done, the government still had enough time to change its mind in the face of very adverse public reaction. Did the government do that? Oh no. This government got its back against the wall even more, decided it knew everything and anything there was to know about this matter, couldn't care about parliamentary tradition. It was just onward and upward and forward from there. This was the way it was going to be, and this was how it was going to be done—who cared about parliamentary tradition, and who cared about the criticisms?

From the get-go on this issue, the government, the cabinet, the Premier showed nothing but contempt for the rest of us, who are duly elected and have a role to play in a parliamentary democracy—a role, I would argue, that most of us take very seriously. The government showed nothing but contempt and disdain for the public, who have a right to know their elected members will be here on the day the budget is presented and will be in their places and able to listen to it and make comments about it. The government showed contempt and disdain for people who would normally come to this place on the day of the budget and be part of the process—for the government or against the government, but at least would be part of the process—by having an invite-only dog-and-pony show up at Magna. From the very beginning, when this plan was hatched—God knows who hatched it, and God knows who was involved in it—from the very moment that the powers that be in the Premier's office decided to go down this road, they showed nothing but contempt and disdain for the public, for MPPs, for the media and for decades of parliamentary tradition with their decision to go off-site.

Speaker, we have had two motions put before us to deal with your ruling that the government is in contempt. The first was put forward by Mr Conway and says: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

My colleague from Timmins-James Bay, Mr Bisson, has moved an amendment to Mr Conway's original motion. That amendment reads: "and not to present the budget in this way constitutes a clear contempt of the House."

1530

I listened with interest to some of the government members' reactions to this as they joined in the debate yesterday. I listened quite carefully to Mr Clark, who made the argument that this amendment should be seen as an expression of non-confidence in the government and that was the way the opposition was going to portray it. So it was going to be difficult, if not impossible, for



government members to support the motion, because the opposition would stand up and say, "This is a vote of non-confidence and you've just voted as not being confident in your own government." He was worried about what he was going to do because that's the way he saw it.

First of all I don't believe that this motion has anything to do with a non-confidence motion. But even if I did, my response to the honourable member is: that's your problem, isn't it? It was you and your government that took yourselves down the road to expressing such disdain for parliamentary tradition in deciding to hold the budget outside of the Legislature. That's not my decision; that's not my problem. You were told by any number of people, your own supporters, "Don't go down this road." You had every opportunity, ample opportunity, and lots of time to change your minds, but the more the criticism of the government grew, the more the government got its back up against the wall, determined to hold the dog-and-pony show off-site. Then they went to Magna, to boot, to make it even worse.

I say to Mr Clark, even if I thought it was a motion of non-confidence, you'll get no sympathy from me for your dilemma. You're not getting any pity from me about the situation you're in. You guys made a conscious decision to go down this road and it has been contemptuous of the rest of us, the media and the public and you've got to bear the responsibility for that.

I don't even believe the argument that Mr Clark made. I don't believe for one moment that the motion we're debating should or can be seen as a motion of non-confidence in the government. Was what the government did stupid? Yes, it certainly was. Did it show contempt? Yes, it certainly did, and the Speaker has proven that. But is it a non-confidence motion in the government? No, it is not. Issues of non-confidence generally involve the budget itself, the fiscal policy and the monetary details and we are not dealing with that here. We're dealing with where it was held, not the contents of it.

Second, you would have a non-confidence motion with respect to the throne speech. We're not dealing with that issue here at all. That's not the context within which we're having this debate.

Third, if we were dealing with a money bill, and the government lost a vote on a money bill, that would be a vote of non-confidence. But we're not dealing with that at this time either. We're not dealing with any details of the budget. We haven't yet dealt with the bills that have come from the budget. So that's not an argument either.

The fourth scenario in which you would have what might be a bill or motion of non-confidence would be where the government itself deemed a bill or motion to be one of non-confidence, as the Liberals did in Ottawa several weeks ago with respect to trying to get more money from the gun registry. But we're not dealing with that here either.

I completely dismiss the argument that was used yesterday by Mr Clark that he is somehow in an awkward position of how he has to vote because this motion should clearly be seen as one of non-confidence. It is not.

It certainly makes it very clear that the government was wrong and that the government should not be so contemptuous as to try to hold a budget off-site. But it is not a motion of non-confidence; it is a motion that this government should be voting for.

I also heard a member yesterday try to use as part of her argument—this was the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services—that, "In my judgment, I had to think about whether we did the right or wrong thing. Did we do the right or the correct thing in having the budget off-site?" Speaker, you already ruled on that issue. That argument is over. All she was trying to do yesterday, and so was one of her colleagues, was essentially to challenge your ruling about that. You have made the decision that contempt was shown. It's not for the government members now to question publicly or question in this House whether or not they made the right decision. You have said very clearly in your ruling that they made the wrong decision. They should be dealing with the fact that they made the wrong decision instead of standing in their place yesterday coming very, very close to challenging your ruling, which is what happened in here yesterday.

I say to the government members, you folks should do yourselves a favour. You should get up and admit that you were wrong, that you made a mistake, that it was a dumb idea to thumb your nose at decades of parliamentary tradition and to make a conscious decision to hold the budget somewhere else. It was a dumb decision. I don't know whose idea it was and I don't really care, but the fact of the matter is that public reaction to it has clearly shown how dumb it was.

Speaker, more importantly, your ruling in this chamber has shown that the government held us in contempt by what they did. I think the government could have gotten out of this mess so quickly last Thursday, if they had wanted to, if someone from that side had merely stood up and said, "Yes, we made a mistake. Yes, we are interested in bringing forward and supporting a motion that would say, 'From now on the budget will be presented in this assembly.'" Do you know how quickly the government could have gotten out of the mess it's now in if someone over there had been smart enough just to come to this place and do that? But the fact that we are still here three days later—we have a government House leader who is more interested in giving us a civics lesson on how this place operates than dealing with the fact that the government had no intention of coming back here, and that's clear by the warrants that were signed just days before the dog-and-pony show at Magna.

You know the government—

*Interjection.*

**Ms Martel:** Here we go again—is not interested. I don't think the government really is sorry. I don't think the government believes that they have shown contempt. I think the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services was right yesterday when she said, "Well, you know, in my judgment, did we do the right or wrong thing?" Never mind what the Speaker has ruled.

"What did we do, the right or wrong thing?" You did the wrong thing, folks. Do yourselves a favour and get out of it. Decide today that you're going to support a motion that very clearly says that from now on in the province of Ontario no government is going to show disdain or contempt by having the budget outside of the Ontario Legislature; from now on the Ontario Legislature is going to be the first recipient of the budget of the province of Ontario, and it's going to happen here in this chamber, where all MPPs can be present and where the public can participate; that's what's going to happen from now on. That's what your government should be in here supporting. Show clearly that you don't hold the Speaker in contempt or the rest of us in ongoing contempt because you refuse to do that.

This is not a motion of non-confidence. Don't try to portray it like this. Admit you made a mistake and get on with it. Support the motion today, support the amendment by my colleague Mr Bisson and say from now on you won't show such contempt and disdain for the public and the province.

**Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** I am very pleased to rise today to speak on this motion by Mr Conway. By way of background, let me first of all review your ruling. In your ruling, you found no case established of privilege being offended in this Legislature. Additionally, you found that no House rules were broken and no practices were offended, because in fact the budget had been presented outside of this House on more than one occasion. I'll speak a little bit more to that later. It was done both by the Liberals and the NDP. In your ruling, you said that any discussion of constitutional law was best left to the courts, and that of course is appropriate. I note you offered no opinion that would suggest that this government did anything wrong with regard to privilege. You did not find that the government was in contempt.

Based upon the arguments that were presented, you said last week that a *prima facie* case was established. I looked up in Webster's dictionary the definition to make sure that I understood it correctly, and indeed that was my understanding. It says that "*prima facie*" means "as it seems at first sight." Of course, you ruled that it would be up to this House to decide, and then you moved to allow Mr Conway to present a motion to the House for discussion, debate and ultimately a vote. It is clear that that is what we're doing now.

1540

Let me speak to the fact that budgets have been presented outside of this House before. We know that in 1988 Liberal Treasurer Robert Nixon read one outside of this assembly and it was not ruled a contemptuous act. Then our friends in the NDP—and of course both you and I, Mr Speaker, were sitting in this House when this happened. Remember the social contract? That, of course, was a budget statement, and that was read outside of this House. I note, as I look back over history, there have been several budgets that the NDP brought down and indeed some that the Liberals brought down where

there was ultimately no vote on the budget. I would suggest if there was anything which was out of order, surely not having a vote on that would seem to be more serious.

Turning to what we did in presenting the budget in a facility outside of this House, let me say that in no way were we trying to truncate the process but rather to expand it, and in fact in this respect we had a very broad-ranging pre-budget consultation which involved several thousands of people across this great province. Indeed, during those consultations I consulted with my constituents in the great riding of Don Valley West, and those thoughts were submitted to the finance minister for her consideration in preparing the budget.

On the day of the budget, the budget papers were presented and tabled with the Clerk of the assembly. There was a budget lock-up for the media and for parliamentarians of all parties in the normal way. Of course, opposition members were all invited to the reading of the speech by the finance minister. As is tradition, on the day that the budget is read, only the finance minister presents a speech and then there is an adjournment. You do not in those ways have the opposition speaking to it, other than to the press. Of course, the opposition spoke to it to the press in the normal way on the day that the budget was presented.

This government has undertaken to table budgets in a timely fashion before the end of the fiscal year, and indeed this is what we did. This is the first time, if I remember correctly, that this has been done since the 1970s, which allows our transfer partners to have some level of certainty in preparing their own fiscal arrangements for that year.

There will of course be budget bills presented in this House, and they will be debated. They will be debated as soon as we get out of this debate. The first order of business obviously was the throne speech, and then we will move on to budget debate. There will be a full debate, and ultimately our government will bring it to a vote, something which the NDP on several occasions didn't bother to do.

Let us turn to some of the things that were in the budget and speak about that in a little bit more detail. But first I just want to parenthetically mention that I find that the H word that we are not allowed to use in this House comes to mind when I hear the protestations of the Liberals and the NDP, given the fact that budgets have been presented by both the Liberals and the NDP outside of this House. One has to wonder about the level of self-indignation that is being brought on.

Let's look at the details of this budget, which was a very good budget for Ontario. It's a budget which will strengthen this province's economy. We know that in the years since we formed the government, we have had over one million net new jobs in this province, and indeed growth in this province today is the best of all of the G7 nations; it is better than Canada itself. Canada is leading the G7 nations, but Ontario's economy is in fact better than all the rest of Canada. Indeed, the economists suggest that next year we will once again lead the G7



nations. This is not by accident; it's because we have worked away at making this province more successful by having lower taxes and less red tape, which encourages businesses to invest in this province. Only through that investment do we get the jobs which were sadly lacking as a result of the actions of the two previous governments. You will recall, of course, that we had over a million people on welfare in this province when we formed the government. Today we have an economy which is doing well. We have done this by making hard decisions, but they are principled decisions which we have taken to the people, and they have endorsed us.

We have the fifth consecutive balanced budget in this province. It's amazing that the last time there were five balanced budgets in a row was 1908. Think about that—1908. That means all of those governments in between have once in a while balanced a budget.

Let me turn to the Liberals. It's very interesting that in 1990 they claimed they were going to have a balanced budget. It was the first time. They brought down a budget which said it was balanced, but in point of fact the auditor has pointed out that whilst you claimed a balanced budget, it was some \$3.029 billion in deficit when the NDP took over.

Back the year before that, in 1989, in the budget documents that were presented it was suggested by the government of the day, the Liberals, that they would have a \$550-million deficit. In fact, it was only because of an unusually large amount of money, which was unanticipated, which the government of the day received from the federal government that they were able to suggest there was a balance. They got \$888 million, which wasn't anticipated, and yet notwithstanding that, they claimed only to have a \$90-million surplus. We know they created that by something known as pre-flow, where you flow your revenue which should have been recognized in the following year into that year and you put off till future years expenditures that should have been recognized then. It was complete sleight of hand. So for the Liberals to talk about budgeting is quite ridiculous, because they wouldn't understand the budgeting process if they fell over it.

Over the years, we have reduced taxes substantially in this province. In our first mandate, we committed to reducing the personal portion of provincial income taxes by an average of 30%; we delivered on that. Now we will complete our 20% personal income tax reduction by January 1, providing \$900 million a year in additional tax relief.

I particularly address the NDP in this. It's interesting that they always say, "But what about the poor people? You're helping your friends." In point of fact, this budget will eliminate another 45,000 people from the Ontario provincial tax rolls. This will bring the total up to 700,000 people who will no longer pay provincial income taxes, but still many of those people are considered rich enough for your friends the federal Liberal Party to tax. I say shame on them. They should follow our model and take those people off the tax rolls, because I believe

the people know how to spend their money a lot better than Liberals.

In this budget we have—

*Interjection.*

1550

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** I think that the Liberals take it as a joke that we are removing people from the tax rolls and yet the federal Liberals continue to tax those people. It's unfortunate that that's their attitude. But, indeed, it does confirm the attitude that the Liberals do believe that they know how to spend people's money better than the people themselves.

Turning to health care: this budget projects a \$28.1-billion expenditure on health care. That's an increase of \$1.9 billion over last year. In fact, going back to when we formed the government seven and a half years ago, the previous government was spending \$17.6 billion. In other words we have added, in those seven and a half short years, \$10 billion, or more than 55%, to the budget for health care in this province. Put another way, we have taken the expenditures on health care from 32% of the operating budget all the way up to 46% of the operating budget today.

Over the years, seniors have told me that they didn't mind paying their fair share of taxes, but have said that a lot of the burden of education should fall off when they become seniors. Indeed, that is what we are moving on with this budget. We are removing seniors through the property tax credit, for both those people who rent their accommodation and those people who own their accommodation. Across this province, this will mean an average saving of some \$475 per household.

We have not forgotten family caregivers and the disabled in this budget. They will receive an increase in the annual tax credit of approximately \$300.

One thing which is tremendously important to all of us is our children and the education they receive. This budget is investing over \$2 billion over the next three years to implement the recommendations of Dr Rozanski in his report. It allows for an additional 20,000 spaces to be added to our colleges and universities to address the so-called double cohort. This will bring a total of 135,000 new spaces that have been added to the capacity of colleges and universities across this great province.

In conclusion, our priorities as a government remain: making sure that we're prosperous by ensuring that the infrastructure of the province is addressed, something that the last two governments neglected; and by increasing the capacities of our colleges and universities. All across this province, we have cranes around the hospitals increasing the capacity and the abilities of hospitals. We believe sincerely that people know how to spend their own money better than governments. That's why we are leaving more of their money in their own pockets, because we believe that the most important things are our citizens and our way of life. We are protecting it.

The motion that has been brought by Mr Conway is something which I think is specious, given the fact that

they, in fact, brought forward a budget outside of this House. The NDP also brought forward a budget outside of this House. Yet, this is pure, unbridled politics that they're playing. I'm proud to say that I will be voting against the motion.

**Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** I am happy to join the debate and support my colleague from Renfrew, Sean Conway, and his motion.

I believe that the House was in contempt when the budget was delivered outside of this House. I believe that on the eve of this budget production at Magna—I think it might have been after 5 o'clock the night before—a fax came through to my office here at Queen's Park. All of a sudden my invitation arrived to participate the next day. Of course, I was in the city of Windsor, and many of the members were in their home ridings, waiting to see whether they'd even have a seat at the table. The evening before, someone clearly thought, "Well, maybe we can just send them along an invitation." It's the kind of invitation you send when you really don't want people to be there. You send it to them at the 11th hour, and obviously you know that their plans won't allow them to get there.

I marvel about the audacity that the government has to pull this kind of a stunt. Everybody knows we're in the midst of an election here; we're just waiting for the call of it. We knew that this document would be more an election document than a budget document, but at a minimum, had it been delivered in this House it would carry the full weight of being an official document of the House as a budget.

As it is right now, in our second week back into session, the government has yet to table the budget bill. I marvelled, when we did sit here last week and listen through the throne speech, at the number of things I heard delivered through the media at the fake budget announcement from Magna, a number of items that did not appear the next week or the week after in the throne speech.

I'm glad to see that our friend Bob Runciman is in the House today to listen to this debate. I marvelled at what Sean Conway was able to deliver to the House today, not because anyone else could access this order in council, and I look at the amount in an interim agreement that he signed giving public safety and security less than \$1 billion for the several months that this will account for. I wonder if this amount includes the helicopter that was announced at the fake budget at the Magna plant. Is the helicopter included in this amount that he signed? I didn't hear about the helicopter for the Toronto police force in the throne speech, but I did hear about it through the media at the Magna fake budget presentation.

Elements like that get thrown out like trial balloons: "Let's see how people are going to react." Well, in the time between the fake budget presentation at Magna and the throne speech, somebody called Bob—I like to call him Rambo Bob—said, "Hey, the Toronto police force doesn't have the operating budget to continue to operate the helicopter even if they handed it to them on a silver

platter." Lo and behold, the helicopter did not appear as an announcement in the throne speech, and I marvel at that. What else did we hear through the media and the fake budget speech at Magna that is not in a budget document that has yet to be tabled in this House?

When Sean Conway stood in the House today and spoke about the special warrant that was issued, I saw that the House leader on the opposite side scrambled to get information in time for his little show that followed about how governments do this all the time. That's nonsense. Governments don't do this all the time. Governments have a responsibility to provide a budget bill in this House so that each one of us, duly elected by our voters, can look at it at the same time. We should have equal access to these kinds of documents. We should have the ability to know the kind of detail that is in a budget bill that drives the process of every ministry in this government and affects my riding and my residents every day of every week of the year. I should be able to access that. Whether we won our own seats in this House by a huge, whopping majority or a slim majority, we've earned the right to be here, and that means we've earned the right to access information at the same time as all of you on that side of the House.

Do you know what's worse? When you hear the stories from the Conservative backbenchers, some of them knew as little as we did on this side of the House. They didn't even know where they were going or whether they'd get into the Magna plant themselves, or whether they'd be barred from the information, or what the content would be of that fake budget that was being presented.

I see one of the members shaking his head. He's a newly arrived recruit to the House. Now, haven't been that much longer in this House than that gentleman—I've been here since 1995—but I remember the first day I stepped in this House. It was a training day for the Club 95ers. Do you know that in that year in 1995, of the 130 seats which we had at that time, 80 of those seats were brand new people, more than half—80 of those 130 had never set foot in the Legislature before. I'll tell you, AL: none of the 80 knew the rules of this House; none of the 80 knew the procedures or the parliamentary traditions of the House; none knew that there was a book under there that would tell you when to stand, when to sit, how to address the Speaker, how to address ministers through the Speaker; what it all meant; why there was a sceptre sitting on the table in front of us; what the Sergeant at Arms' role is in the House. None of us knew those things; 80 of the 130 didn't know.

Do you know what we had to do? We had to rely on the traditions of the House. We had to get up to speed with the traditions of the House and the customs, and we knew that at that time one of those things was the budget. We knew that it's the budget document that drives everything else. It's what sends the ministers scrambling in in their last-minute lobby effort to get their projects represented in that budget. It's what makes all of us as MPPs, whether on the government side or not, scramble to get



our information through by whatever means we can to that finance committee that is developing the budget document. In this case, apparently, it's just a few whiz kids in the back of the Premier's office; the Finance Minister just gets to sit and read. We're surprised she didn't have a teleprompter installed at her desk here in the chamber so it could be more like TV.

1600

In 1995, that's what 80 people had to learn, because they knew nothing of this. But this place has been here a long time—long before I got here in 1995. The people in Windsor West who sent me back here twice know the job I have to do. We also know there are rules in this House that allow me to do my job. Whether I'm a Liberal or a member of any other political party, I have that right.

In 1995, meeting pretty much all the 130 members, I knew instinctively which MPPs had sat in opposition before. You could tell by their demeanour. You could tell by the way they behaved. You could tell by the way they would even grant you a minute to say your piece. They were the first ones to tell you, "Sit down. I don't want to hear from you. We don't want to hear what you have to say."

The lion's share of the new people who came into the House in 1995 had no regard for the opposition. I have to give some of the Tory MPPs credit. They were the ones who had been here before, when they sat in opposition. They knew what the rules were and what their rights were.

I commend Sean Conway. They call him the dean of the House for a reason. He's been on this side of the House, and he's been on that side of the House. He knows what the rules are and what our rights are. Every one of us owes it to each of the rest of us sitting here that we get equal access. That's the whole point.

This past Friday, I spent a couple of hours at Catholic Central High School in the heart of my riding. I was talking to a civics class about government. The speech to all the grade 10 students always starts with, "If there's one thing you have to remember about government in this nation, one thing you need to understand that makes us different from other countries that do not have a democracy, that one thing I beg you to remember is Her Loyal Opposition. If you understand the concept of Her Loyal Opposition, you will understand why our system is based on the British Parliament. Why is it 'her'? Why isn't it 'his'? Because it represents the Queen."

We go through this entire discussion with the class to talk about how the difference with our Parliament is allowance for the watchdog role of Her Loyal Opposition. We access information that proves it's the truth. You don't get to do whatever you want without having to report to this House so every one of us can look, see documents and access information to know that what you're doing is true. That is a fundamental principle that you threw out that biggest window when you took that budget to Magna.

There are a couple of members on that side of the House who understand that concept and will likely be

supporting the motion. But I am urging the balance of the members here in this House, some of you who have never sat in opposition before, to talk to your colleagues who have, so that you as Conservative members can understand that when you are in opposition again you still will have the right to access information.

When I go back to another grade 10 class to talk about civics, that one fundamental principle all of us have adopted for centuries, that role of Her Loyal Opposition and the access we have—I'll tell you who understands that concept better than most: the Speaker of this House, Gary Carr, who took extraordinary heat, I'm sure, from his own caucus colleagues, members of his party, because he dared to stand up for this fundamental belief in a system that is a non-partisan position.

I go back to my riding of Windsor West and I marvel at the number of Tories, really dyed-in-the-wool blue Tories, stopping me in the street to tell me how crazy that was. What was Ernie Eves doing? Granted, they're probably Flaherty supporters or supporters of another leadership candidate, but they couldn't believe he had done it.

Last session when we were in this House, I remember bringing forward an order in council we had found. It was a document that had been signed, again in secret, which nobody knew about. Most of the cabinet did not know the government had signed off, by order in council, a \$10-million secret deal for professional sports teams. We found that out and brought it up in this House.

I remember distinctly looking at the Premier and saying, "How could you do this? How could you benefit only those few corporations when the rest of them are going begging?"

Do you know what he said when I asked him that question in this House? He said, "That was before I was here. That is not how I operate."

I said, "You were here," and he said, "I wasn't here." It was in those very few months when he was at a fancy bank on Bay Street, and he would not operate that way. That was his answer.

Today our colleague Sean Conway stood up with an order in council that clearly was done during the Premier's tenure, if he did have an argument back then that he wasn't here or it never would have happened, and sure enough he's gone beyond the pale this time. Can you imagine the House leader on that side of the House standing up and saying every party does it? Every party does not take over half the expenditures of the entire government and put them in a special warrant. That is unprecedented. The members opposite know this.

I deserve the right to ask the question on the one page that accompanies this special warrant of expenses: in the health and long-term care amount that's been allotted, are the health centres properly funded? Is there money in this amount to move forward quickly for family physicians to arrive in most of Ontario that is underserved? I deserve the right to ask those questions, and I deserve to have the background data that accompanies this. I get the right to say: "In Sarnia-Lambton they're struggling for physicians. Is there money in here?"



I would say to the member opposite from Lambton, you don't know that the money is in here, because that budget has never been tabled officially in this House.

There we are, on fake budget day, called upon by the media for our responses to a process that was never legitimized by being brought into this House.

Many years ago I was the president of an organization, an Italian club in Windsor called the Fogolar Furlan Club, one of the most successful Italian clubs in the nation. It's one of 18 across Canada. Sure, their budget isn't the billions of dollars of the Ontario government. Ten years ago we had \$2 million revenue a year. We had a membership of 900, and our executive council, of which I was president for two terms, would meet on a regular basis to determine the expenses of the organization. It was our due to report those expenses to the general assembly on a regular basis. Let me tell you that our members would be on the ceiling if they found out there were expenses that had been allocated for a purpose they didn't approve of and that they didn't give their stamp of approval to.

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean):** Northern Italy.

**Ms Pupatello:** Of course they were from northern Italy. That only made them great organizers of their cultural centre.

The point is that we owe it to our own constituencies. This is how we expect non-profit organizations to work across the nation. Here we are, the largest non-profit in Ontario, and we can't get our systems right to table a legitimate budget, so that I, as critic for the health area, can say, "I want to know what summarizes those totals. What does it mean to the people?"

It was only last week that the health minister stood up and said, "Gee, I didn't know that half the nurses are working part-time." Can you imagine? What planet has he been on this entire time? Is this a minister who never sat in that chair and really, truly listened to the opposition when we raised these issues repeatedly and said that half the problem is that multi-year stable funding to hospitals has not happened, despite your protestations over the last eight years that you would do it. You've never done it. Subsequently those hospitals are never in a position to hire full-time because they don't know if the money will be there to continue to pay them the next year. So they don't hire them full-time.

1610

Do we need to sit and lecture the Minister of Health, in this week of all weeks, Nurses' Week, about why he has such casualization in the nursing workforce? Why are we doing this? Because we don't know the answers. Is the plan in the budget that's going to take care of this problem that was so clearly identified during the SARS crisis in Toronto? Will we have time in the last two weeks that we've finally been in session to table a legitimate bill? Can I know, as the representative for Windsor West, that the money is in the budget for the Daimler-Chrysler plant in Windsor? We know that the fate of 2,500 extremely well-paid jobs are hanging in the bal-

ance for that announcement, a joint federal-provincial announcement of \$350 million. Would this government make the people wait for an election, use that as an election issue and come to my riding to make that kind of grand announcement? Will the people at Navistar sit and wait through a campaign to see if any monies have been allocated for the auto sector when you have been pushed and prodded by all sectors to look clearly at what the future holds for Ontario in the area of the auto industry?

I ask you that. People out there are thinking we're crazy, quite frankly, because we're looking a gift horse in the mouth. We're watching the jobs go south. Never has that been more clear than in Windsor, where we have to see it every day, and we sit and wait for a border announcement. Is the \$300 million, half of which is represented by the provincial government, in the budget document? Everybody knows we've got a crisis in infrastructure to cross our borders, where the lion's share of how well the Ontario economy did was based on trade. Our largest trading partner is the United States and the largest trading point in the nation is in Windsor. Is that \$150 million represented there?

These are legitimate questions that I as the local representative duly elected by the people of Windsor West get to ask. So I don't think it's unrealistic that all of us realize how bad it was, that you had done something terribly wrong by going to Magna, and even in the time since that fake budget you've not done the right thing. You've had more than two weeks to table a budget and we haven't seen a bona fide document. We don't know if what we heard in the throne speech will be represented in the budget. We'll fear for that if many of those things are in there. We don't know how much of those issues or new items or wedge issues were just trial balloons while you poll madly every night to see the public reaction, because those items then will not be in the budget when it's presented. Will we have a budget before the election?

We're telling you the process was wrong and you got caught being very wrong, not just by people who are here in this House every day but by people out there, the people who matter, the people, as you say, whom you were trying to get to with the budget. What it showed me is that people do have quite a high level of respect for this place and you owe it to them to put the budget in this House. Those were people who don't canvass for political parties, they don't belong to political parties; they're regular, everyday people who know the import of the provincial government on their everyday lives, whether it be how their kids go to school and what kind of education they receive or the level of health care their parents, children and spouses are receiving from us. Those are the people who care whether we're doing right by them, and it showed me that they have respect for the House. If my constituents have respect for this House, I as their representative have a duly elected duty to be in this House on their behalf and have access, like all members of this House, to all of the information on a timely basis. But in particular I should have access to a budget that is duly presented in this House.



**Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing):** It is a pleasure for me to stand in my place and join the debate. I must say it is truly a great honour to represent my riding of Nipissing and to represent individuals in Ontario. We're here to debate this issue today and tonight regarding the budget. I just want to say that we talk about tradition, and I thought I'd bring a dictionary and just read the definition of "tradition" to everyone at home who might be watching so they fully understand. It's "a custom, opinion, or belief handed down to posterity ... by practice ... this process of handing down ... an established practice or custom."

*Interjections.*

**Mr McDonald:** So I just want to say to all the parents and grandparents out there who are listening that the tradition of this place is to have the other side scream and yell when you're trying to get your point across. Now, isn't that something that we should be very proud of, to teach our children, our grandchildren, that it's OK for them to scream when we have the floor? I look at my colleague here. I can tell you when the member from Windsor West was speaking, I didn't yell across and try to get my point. I didn't agree with some of the things she was saying. She believes that what she's saying is correct. I didn't interrupt her. Nor did I try to get her off track or the whole bit. I believe in respect. Respect is what we're all about.

When you see the polls, and politicians or elected officials are at the bottom of the totem pole, I ask you, why wouldn't we be? Somebody just has to turn on this channel and watch us. We behave terribly. I see that every single day that I'm in here. If we want to talk about tradition—that's tradition. Tradition is to yell back and forth. I've sat in this House now for almost a year, and I've seen the obscene gestures from both sides of the House. I've heard the cursing and swearing from both sides of the House. Should we hold our children and our grandchildren to that tradition? No. I believe there should be a new practice. There's a new practice of respect. I can tell you that when I talk to a lot of constituents in my riding, they say, "I watch, and sometimes I turn it off because they're just yelling back and forth and nothing is being accomplished."

When I sat on the municipal council and there were ideas put forth that I didn't agree with, or they didn't agree with my ideas, nobody was yelling back and forth. I guess it's OK, once you arrive here at this traditional place that has so much history, to yell back and forth. But I disagree. I believe there should be respect. We should be able to get our ideas across. Do you know what? In the end, when we vote, we vote to determine what the decision will be, and the majority always wins. There's nothing wrong with that. That's democracy. That's what we're here for. That's what we're here to debate.

So when I listen to tradition—and I heard a few of the members speak about tradition and about the budget. I read the definition of "tradition." Tradition in practice shows that it has been done twice before. It just seems that everyone has forgotten to mention those two other

times: once was Mr Nixon and once was Floyd Laughren. They presented the budget outside the House. To be honest with you, the circumstances were a little bit different, but the fact remains that it has been done. That's a practice. What happens is it has been done twice; now it's a third time. What is tradition? That's what we have to get across. You can't just say, "They did it," without standing up and saying, "Do you know what? Our party did it as well." I never heard anyone on that side of the House stand up and say, "Well, do you know what? I don't like what they did, but we did it as well." Not once did I hear that.

I just want to say that as we stand here and debate this issue—and we could debate it for the next couple of days, from what I understand; that's what we're going to do—there are more important things to debate. There's the province of Ontario to run. We need to get out there. There are good things happening in our province. I think we should be getting on with the governance of the province of Ontario.

When I think of northern Ontario and what I heard in the throne speech and in the budget speech, I heard a commitment for tax incentive zones. I must say that when Premier Eves visited Mattawa, Ontario, last week, he announced that northern Ontario was going to be a tax incentive zone—the whole northern part of the province, which makes up about 85% of the geography of the province of Ontario.

We know that Ontarians are concerned about their health care. We know they're concerned about education. I can tell you in northern Ontario we're concerned about jobs and keeping our youth in the north. That's important us, to build our northern communities. We want to be able to provide our young people the opportunity to remain in northern Ontario and create the opportunities for them so that they may be able to remain and raise families of their own and build our communities. The flip side of that is that we can protect our senior citizens.

**1620**

When a tax credit for senior citizens was announced in the throne speech and the budget—when I went out and met with seniors' groups and talked to senior citizens, a lot of them were very concerned that they couldn't stay in their houses because property taxes are going up and the costs of running cities are getting more expensive and services are getting more expensive and labour costs are getting more expensive. A lot of these senior citizens have come and spoken to me and said, "You know, I'm really worried that I can't stay in my house." These senior citizens built our country, they built our cities, they built our communities, and I support that. I support the fact that we're here to help our senior citizens. I think that's crucial.

Quite honestly, I was very surprised that you voted against it; I really was. I thought you would support the senior citizens, but you've taken a stance. I've heard your stance. You don't want to help senior citizens on the property tax credit because you don't think they deserve it. That's fair. You have stated that. You're on the record. That's OK.

*Interjections.*

**Mr McDonald:** Mr Speaker, we're going back to tradition. I'm just trying to get my point across, and the members opposite are yelling across. They don't want the public to know that they voted against this property tax credit for senior citizens.

There are good things happening in my riding. We're building a new health care facility. I think it's \$212 million. It's a regional health care centre that will enable us to attract and retain physicians and specialists, who are very important to us.

I might just add that it was your government back in 1985 that cancelled our hospital the first time around. It was announced by this government in 1984, and in 1985 you cancelled it. You said to the people of North Bay and area—and that's Callander, Mattawa, Powassan—"You know what? We don't believe you deserve a new hospital." Even though they were old buildings, you cancelled our hospital.

Mr McGuinty came to my riding. He flew into North Bay. He didn't even get in a car and come downtown. He did his little media conference at the airport and flew off. I believe he went to Sudbury. You know what he had to say? He said, "I won't cancel any project that's going on on Highway 11." What he basically said was, "I don't really care about Highway 11, because when I go to Sudbury, I'm four-laning Highway 69." He did not commit to Highway 11. If you had listened to what he said, he said, "If there's a contract now for five kilometres of Highway 11"—which there is—"I won't cancel that one. But guess what? My priorities are Sudbury and Highway 69." He was very clear on that.

What I also found very interesting was the announcement about studded tires for northern Ontario. The plan was studded tires. This is his plan for northern Ontario. He's going to allow us to have studded tires. Well, we all know that studded tires wreck highways. The investment we're putting into highways now is just an incredible amount of money. When I see the tenders, I go, "Oh my God. That's a lot of money." And here we are, we have a leader of a party saying, "We're going to put studded tires on for northern Ontarians."

The first thing I asked was, "So when I come down to Toronto, do I change my tires at Barrie, or am I going to be allowed to keep my studded tires on all the way to Toronto?" I haven't figured that part out. What I found very interesting is that when he went to Sault Ste Marie he said, "We're not doing studded tires."

Mr Bartolucci, what do you have to say? I understand that that's your issue, that you've really been pushing for studded tires for northern Ontario. I don't agree with it, but that's OK that you agree with it. But your leader goes to the Soo and says no. I don't know if you've brought that up behind closed doors, because I'm sure you can't speak to that today, but he said no.

So in Sudbury he said studded tires and in North Bay he said studded tires, but in Sault Ste Marie he said no. I guess Sault Ste Marie isn't in northern Ontario. So either he has forgotten what northern Ontario is—I've been

here for a year, about 365 days, and he hasn't said "northern Ontario" once in this Legislature. Not once did he stand up and say "northern Ontario." Not once did he ask a question about northern Ontario. He never asked the Minister of Northern Development and Mines a question. He never asked the Minister of Natural Resources—something that's very important. What Mr McGuinty is telling us is: "I don't care about northern Ontario, because there are only five or 10 seats up there. All I care about is southern Ontario."

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** We have a whole program; it's called Ontario North.

**Mr McDonald:** Mr Bartolucci, you're the one who's going to have to answer as to why you're not doing studded tires in Sault Ste Marie while you're doing it in Sudbury and North Bay. So I'll leave that with the member from Sudbury.

I go back to the fact that they've cancelled their hospital. They're not going to four-lane Highway 11. I watched our Premier go up and say that he's committed to doing Highway 69, and then I see these ads in the newspaper. It's the member from Sudbury taking credit for the four-laning of Highway 69. I sat here, and I watched Mr Bartolucci deliver petition after petition about Highway 69. He was very adamant about Highway 69. The Premier used to sit in Parry Sound; that was part of his riding. He thought it was the right thing to do. He got up and announced that he was going to four-lane Highway 69. He didn't make a great big deal of it. He didn't do media conferences and send out letters to the editor. He went up and he did the right thing.

But he committed to Highway 11. He committed to the fact that Highway 11 was going to be done; something that Mr McGuinty did not do. I want to say to the constituents of Nipissing, he did not commit to Highway 11.

Hopefully—and I don't believe that they would—they wouldn't cancel our new hospital. But they've done it once before. So there is some concern in our community about that.

We look at health care in the north, and we're very fortunate that we have a specialist in the area. His name is Dr McKinley, and his wife is Dr Hegge. They performed the first robotic surgery in the province of Ontario between North Bay and Hamilton. It's a project that I firmly believe we should be financing, because it talks about Telehealth, telemedicine, telementoring. It's a situation where he can train other doctors throughout northern Ontario without their having to travel. In other words, they can be part of this program and learn from this doctor who has a lot of expertise. There would be a lot of efficiencies there. So a doctor in Timmins would not have to travel to Toronto to learn this new surgery. He can watch it on the television and be interactive. It's a great project.

I also want to state that in the throne speech and in the budget there was something that I'm sure a lot of the members opposite haven't picked up, but it's especially important to the members from northern Ontario. It's the



Electronic Child Health Network. That's good news for us in northern Ontario because a lot of the specialists are down here in Toronto and Ottawa. Now we're able to connect with them so that—let's say you're a parent and you had a sick child; you could bring the sick child into our hospital, the X-ray could be taken and at the same time the X-ray is being taken it could be reviewed by a specialist in Toronto Sick Kids. Then they could discuss what treatment they're going to take without the family having to jump in their car or fly down to Toronto. We all know how expensive it is to stay in Toronto, and you can imagine how traumatic it is to have to come down here, find a hotel, get transportation back and forth and take time off work.

The Electronic Child Health Network will be good news for the people of Ontario, and I have to congratulate the Premier and the Minister of Health for taking that step, for believing in northern Ontario. Like I said, in my whole year here the leader of the official opposition has never stood up and said "northern Ontario" any day that I was in the House.

This is a very honourable profession, and I believe that we should uphold the traditions of the House, but the proper traditions, not the tradition of no respect but the tradition of respect and difference of opinion.

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr McDonald:** As I'm trying to get my message across and they're yelling across, for whatever reason—I guess they're arguing that "That's OK, that is tradition and we support that." But you have to be sensitive to the fact that we should all be able to speak to the issues. We should all be part of the process. In the end, when we vote, that's what determines what the decision will be.

1630

When I was downtown the other day in the city of North Bay, I had an individual whose name was Carmine Ricciuti. He's a very proud Italian-Canadian. He actually gave me this tie with "Canada" on it. What he told me was, he is proud to be a Canadian. Ontarians think of themselves as Canadians first and Ontarians second. They think of themselves as Canadians. They believe that what happens in Ontario should be good for the rest of the country. I'm a firm believer in that too because, you know what? We live in a great country. We live in a country that has a lot of different beliefs, a lot of different cultures, a lot of different individuals who want to be part of this. We need to be inclusive in our decision-making. As elected officials, we share in the responsibility of consulting with our constituents, with the people of Ontario in what they believe is the vision of our province, the vision of our communities, our cities.

I was very proud. I took part in the consultation on the throne speech. I invited my communities out to be part of it and asked them their opinion, their vision and their ideas on where we should go. I've only been here for a year now and I have never heard of that being done before. When I hear "tradition"—to me, tradition is, do we ask people or not? It has never been done before, but I think that's a great tradition that we're asking the people

of Ontario for direction, for input in the consultation of the throne speech. If we were to say, "That's not tradition. We can't do it," does that make it right? No; I believe we're inclusive.

Ten years ago nobody knew what the Internet was. Now we have the Internet, and I heard one of the members speak about on-line voting. I heard one of the members—I think it was from the Toronto-Rosedale area—say, "When we form the government, we're going to fix the election date." You know what, Mr Speaker? That's the American way of doing things. Here he's standing up saying, "We're going to follow tradition, tradition, tradition," and then he stands up and says, "We're going to fix the election date."

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** Where's their consistency?

**Mr McDonald:** Yes. Where is the consistency? Where's that all coming from? I must say that I was really surprised he said it. Standing up and speaking for tradition—you can't argue against that, but when you say, "OK, we're going to change tradition because this is what we think tradition should be," then we're getting into differences of opinion. I don't agree with that opinion. That's their argument; that's their strategy. Who am I to say that's wrong or right? I believe we should follow some of the tradition of the place, and we should be doing that, but there are changes. We have to accept that society's changing. Things are evolving faster than we even want to admit. We've seen what change has been in the last 100 years. We're going to see that amount of change done in the next 10 years, and I believe we should be ready for it.

Having said that—and I know my time is running out; it always seems to go very quickly when we're down here in the Legislature—I must say to all MPPs that we need to be respectful. We have to understand there are differences in our beliefs, and we should be representing our constituents to the best of our abilities respectfully.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** Listening to much of the debate, it would be hard to understand, I think for any member of this Legislature, certainly for anybody from the public who would be listening, what in fact we're talking about. What is currently before this House is Mr Conway's motion—and I'll review how we got to this point—which is simply that this Legislative Assembly affirms that budgets should be read here first, or the amendment to that motion, moved by Mr Bisson, that if that does not happen, it is a clear case of contempt. That is what is currently before this House.

How did we get here? On or about March 12, 2003, the Premier decided to consult with the Lieutenant Governor and said, "We don't want to come back to the Parliament as we're scheduled to do on March 17. We want to prorogue the House. We want to end this session of Parliament." On that same day the finance minister said, "We're going to present our budget outside of the House." So the government on the one hand says, "We don't want any legislative accountability or scrutiny of our plans and we're going to end the session," and on the

other hand, the finance minister says, "We're going to present this budget somewhere other than in here at the Legislature of the province of Ontario, in the people's place."

That event happened on March 27. Where? The Minister of Finance went to Brampton, to the training centre of Magna International, and to a hand-picked, invitation-only audience presented the 2003 Ontario budget. Of course, upon returning to this House on Thursday, May 1, my colleague Sean Conway, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, said, "Hey, wait a second. Just hold on. This offends this House. This is contempt. This shows disrespect, disdain. This is the height of arrogance by Ernie Eves and Janet Ecker, by the cabinet, by the Tory government, of this Legislature, whom they are supposed to serve, and the people of the province of Ontario."

Mr Conway put forward a very compelling argument that in fact Mr Eves has shown contempt for the people of Ontario and for this institution. Speaker, you did rule, and you were very clear in your ruling. I'll read some excerpts because I know some of the government members have been taking great pains to talk about how there were no rules broken, how nothing was done wrong. If that's the case, why are we even having this debate today? Why is it even necessary to affirm the right of the Ontario Legislative Assembly to be the first recipient of the Ontario government's budget? Speaker, you said that the government, by implying "that parliamentary institutions and processes in Ontario tend to interfere with the government's message to the public, such statements tend to reflect adversely on those institutions and processes." So it undermines the people of Ontario's confidence in the Ontario Legislature and its ability to do the people's business.

Of course, governments do three main things. The first is, they pass the laws, the rules that we all agree as citizens and residents of this province are going to regulate our behaviours and promote our province and make sure that we have a civil society. Governments pass laws—all governments do—and we have debate and discussion on what those laws are, how they should apply, if they're severe or not severe, what the consequences will be to breaking those laws. The second thing that governments do is they spend the people's money on whatever services and programs and building and infrastructure the people of Ontario deem necessary to our society. The third thing, and it also has to do with money, is the raising of those funds. Those last two items, the spending and appropriation or the taxing of the public purse, are the Ontario budget. So besides the laws which are passed and the debates we have about bills—private member and government—the budget is perhaps the single most important thing that any government will do.

Speaker, this is what you had to say: "Given the public's reaction to the government's decision to stage a budget presentation outside the House, I think Ontarians are rather fond of their traditional parliamentary institutions and parliamentary processes, and they want greater

deference to be shown towards the traditional parliamentary forum in which public policies are proposed, debated and voted on."

1640

In fact, Speaker, you admonished the government. You said, "Parliamentary democracy is not vindicated by the government conducting a generally one-sided public relations event on the budget well in advance of members having an opportunity to hold the government to account for the budget in this chamber." That's really important, because the government rules for the majority of residents. They propose, and with a government majority of course they get their way. But it is the role of the opposition to scrutinize, to hold the government accountable, to ask hard questions and demand answers. When the government seeks to undo this type of dynamic, when it seeks to frustrate the ability of our process to work, both the ability to propose and to oppose, they in fact undermine our democratic institutions and show contempt, disregard and disdain. It's rooted in a certain fundamental arrogance.

Speaker, you said, finally, in a strong defence of our parliamentary democracy, "A mature parliamentary democracy is not a docile ... or one-way communications vehicle; it is a dynamic, interactive and representative institution that allows the government of the day to propose and defend its policies—financial and otherwise. It also allows the opposition to scrutinize and hold the government to account for those policies. It is an open, working and relevant system of scrutiny and accountability. If any members of this House have a problem with the concept of parliamentary democracy, then they have some serious explaining to do."

Over the course of these events that I've described to you, I received a number of communications from people in Don Valley East. I want to read one such, but I have others and I did bring them with me. This is from Susan, who e-mailed me, and what's really startling about this is that Susan is not a supporter of the Liberal Party. In fact, Susan subscribes to the campaign bulletins of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. She forwarded me a campaign bulletin, and the authors were Jeff Bangs, Jaime Watt and Leslie Noble, the campaign co-chairs for Ernie Eves's Progressive Conservative Party. The campaign bulletin reads as follows:

"As you know, the opposition was caught completely off guard last week when the government announced plans for a new and innovative way to present its budget policy.

"As House leader Chris Stockwell, pointed out to the caucus yesterday"—so you know this is a legit document—"changes such as these always bring controversy. Once upon a time, legislative committees were only held in sterile committee rooms at Queen's Park." We've heard this line from government members in their speaking points. She continues: "Now they are held all around the province. At first this innovation was controversial. Now, "it is accepted practice.



"Not surprisingly, our critics and the opposition oppose this plan to present the government's budget policy directly to the people of Ontario."

The bulletin goes on to say, "There is no rule that prohibits the announcement of government policy outside of the House. Quite the contrary, it is a regular occurrence and this particular initiative is simply the next step forward in" the so-called "democratization of government business."

"Below you will find an outline of the House rules pertaining to budgets, how the government's plan conforms to those rules and just how off base the opposition charges really are." It is signed "Jeff Bangs, Jaime Watt and Leslie Noble."

You would know that it is the Speaker who is the final authority on what is or is not in order in this House, certainly not some backroom operatives who give government members, cabinet and otherwise, their marching orders.

This is what Susan wrote back. Remember, Susan is not a Liberal. She is a member of the Conservative Party in Don Valley East. She says, "So, like Jeff, Leslie, and Jaime, the rest of the Conservative Party thinks that those outside Queen's Park (the ignorant and easily duped public) don't care what goes on...?"

"I am appalled at the change in the way the budget will be presented and am determined with all my heart to vote out the Conservative Party in the next election."

"Your e-mail message was both defensive and arrogant in its wording ('once upon a time,' 'sterile committee rooms,' and other such sneering phrases), like so many Conservative actions over the past few years. The people of Ontario have learned a hard lesson about allowing any government to hold an overwhelming majority position. It only encourages dictatorial behaviour and rule by backroom cabal."

This is from a Conservative member in Don Valley East.

This is what your own party supporters have to say about your actions, your passage of the budget and your flouting of the rules. It gets even more interesting. I know all members did receive a letter from Mr Bob Marleau, the former Clerk of the House of Commons. He is as non-partisan as possible.

It's very interesting what he has to say here, and I'm only going to use certain excerpts. He said, "Budgets are about levying taxes and spending the proceeds. Over the centuries, we the people have acquired rights from the crown to scrutinize government policies, especially spending policies, through well-established and time-honoured parliamentary processes. We elect the representatives of the Legislative Assembly to hold the government accountable for its decisions and how it spends our money. At our great expense, we televise the debates of the assembly so that we can see and judge for ourselves the performance of our government and of our opposition parties."

Mr Marleau goes on to say, "The government of Mr Eves has just decided that when it comes to budgetary

policy the Legislature does not matter; that it is just an unimportant process obstacle before the government has its way; that the opposition parties are annoying distractions," that they twist and distort "the grand message of benevolence" from the government.

Mr Marleau accurately predicts, and he says in his letter, "When the Legislature returns in April, this matter will no doubt be raised at the first opportunity. The Speaker will have no choice but to allow the matter to be debated as grave contempt of the Legislature." This grand arrogance, this disdain, this disrespect is grave contempt. Bob Marleau is not a partisan member here.

I want to, first of all, thank the people of Don Valley East who wrote to me, who e-mailed, who called, who faxed, because, quite frankly, I thought it was very uplifting that so many people do value the traditions, do value our democratic institutions.

I wanted to comment a little bit on some of the arguments that I've heard coming from government members. Some have held up the standing orders of the Legislature of Ontario. They said that none of the rules of our Parliament have been broken and that the Speaker has said so. That's simply untrue. Not every rule is written down in this book. In fact, we have many conventions and processes which are just those. They are unwritten rules of this Parliament and others across the Commonwealth of Great Britain. For any member to suggest that the rules were followed is simply false.

I heard some of the government members say that this debate has gotten in the way; we have very important matter to discuss. In fact, I heard the government House leader today argue that we have the matter of interim supply to debate.

This is the Orders and Notices paper for the Ontario Legislative Assembly. There is no motion to consider interim supply contained in here. The government hasn't even filed that motion, yet we've been here for two whole weeks. In fact, the government's budget bills have not even been introduced in the House—though they have introduced three bills, but not the government budget. So it would be impossible, quite frankly, for this House to even discuss the budget that the finance minister introduced at the Magna auto parts plant back on March 27 because interim supply has not been introduced; the budget bills have not been introduced. All we really have is a continuation of the same infomercial by members of the government saying, "We're doing all of these wonderful things." I am going to get to a little bit about what's contained in that budget because it is not quite as it has been presented by certain of the cabinet and backbench members.

I did want to comment on one area. Nowhere in our rules, if we were to accept the government House leader and the government members, that this is the final authority on everything that happens in this Legislature—nothing in here says that Premier Eves has any legitimate right to govern this province. After all, Mr Eves was not elected by the people of this province to lead the government in the province of Ontario. He rules only because of

political convention, because he heads the party which holds the majority of seats. It is disingenuous, in my opinion, for the government ministers and members to argue that they have the legitimacy of government because of political convention but the presentation of a budget is not legitimate under the same conventions. It is a contradiction. Either they don't believe in those conventions, either they don't believe in those unwritten rules—and if that is true, then Mr Eves should resign today, the government should call an election and seek a true mandate from the people of Ontario. Or if they do believe that those conventions protect them and allow them to enjoy the right to rule this province, as they do, the government members should stand up and say, "We made a mistake. We made a mistake to violate the rules, the conventions, that are contained within the Ontario Legislative Assembly and assemblies across the Commonwealth in the British Parliaments."

1650

Lastly, I say to the government members, the reason this has not been done, the reason government members and the Minister of Finance went to Brampton, was in fact to avoid scrutiny of their budget, of the budget papers, of the government direction. If one takes a very close look at what the finance minister presented in her so-called budget, you will see that there is a \$2-billion budget deficit. Contrary to the claims of five years of balanced budgets, it is simply untrue. This year, the 2003-04 budget contains a \$2-billion deficit, as noted by the Dominion Bond Rating Service, as noted by the chief economist of the Toronto-Dominion Bank. In fact, last year's budget wasn't balanced either. There was a half a billion dollars unbalanced; it was in deficit by half a billion dollars. The only reason they could get that far was they applied almost \$1 billion of federal health care money to last year's budget.

Now I can understand why the finance minister and Mr Eves would want to avoid that kind of scrutiny of the shoddy practice here in this Legislature. I can understand why this government is so interested in a one-sided infomercial. I understand why the government, why Mr Runciman and Madam Ecker, signed a secret cabinet order expropriating, stealing, \$36 billion from the people of Ontario without a spending plan being provided to the representatives of the people of Ontario. It is because when you look closely at what the government has proposed for its spending plan and how they're going to raise the money, it does not hold up to any kind of scrutiny.

So I can understand that Mr Eves would not want to be held accountable for his plan. I can certainly appreciate that. But there is a political party—Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals—that does believe in balanced budgets. If and when my colleagues opposite have the guts and the wherewithal to call an election, we are very happy to put our plans in front of the people and they can compare them with our competitors as well. I know that Mr Eves and his plan and his \$2-billion, deficit-ridden budget is going to be found wanting.

There were so many editorials and writings that have gone on. I picked a few, just recently. I couldn't pick them all because I'd be here literally for hours. The Kitchener-Waterloo Record:

"In contempt.

"...opposition parties warned the Ontario government" but they went ahead anyway."

The media "urged Premier Ernie Eves to think again" and the media "were treated with contempt. Eves said the media always raise a fuss.

"And when people across Ontario spoke out against a plan that violated parliamentary traditions ... they were treated with contempt....

"But last week, the criticism came from a source the government can't treat with contempt," and that was from you, Speaker. Lastly, and most importantly, if the people of the province of Ontario want to treat somebody with contempt, they know who to take aim at.

I have the Ottawa Citizen urging members of the government to support Sean Conway's motion. From the Ottawa Sun: "The Tories should simply admit as much"—that they are in contempt—"and move on."

It is clear. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** The member for Hamilton West.

*Applause.*

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that. I thank the minister for the applause. We'll see if you feel the same way in about 19 minutes, 54 seconds.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Don't yell.

**Mr Christopherson:** Well, I won't yell if you don't upset me. How's that? If you give me a chance to get my bit out, we won't have that problem, OK? It's interesting that you'd be the first one to comment, because I decided I was going to open my remarks referring to you. And by "you," Speaker, I mean the government House Leader.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Christopherson:** It's a little early to run out, because I'm going to start with some nice stuff. You might want to hear that. It would begin—and I shouldn't say it's a guaranteed good thing, because the first thing I want to say may do damage to either or both of our reputations. I say through the current Speaker to the previous Speaker and current cabinet minister that I consider him a friend of mine.

Chris Stockwell and I came here on exactly the same day. Our backgrounds—actually there are more similarities than dissimilarities. I remember being the point person acting as his campaign chair within our caucus to elect him Speaker because I really thought he'd do a tremendous job. The fact of the matter is that I think the history books will reflect that Speaker Stockwell was indeed one of the finest Speakers this place has ever seen. I say that as someone who has at least no provincial axe to grind. I'm not running in the next election, so there's nothing for me to gain here, other than to put on the record the fact that I think my friend Chris Stockwell, a Tory, did an excellent job as Speaker.



I open that way because I remember distinctively the day that Speaker Stockwell stood in his place and made the ruling that's been referred to here previously on the issue of a *prima facie* case of contempt. I can remember the tenseness that was in the room, the pressure that was on the Speaker, the concern on this side of the House that this was one of those defining moments. Would he decide, given that clearly he was an independent thinker—you may disagree with him from time to time and he may rile people, but nobody can ever say that Chris Stockwell is in anybody's pocket. We were interested in whether or not, at the end of the day, his ultimate loyalty would be as a Tory, which would be understandable, or to the duties of being Speaker, which to us on this side of the House was obviously the side we hoped he would fall on, and indeed he did. I can remember the reaction on the government benches, not dissimilar to what's happening now. There were a lot of Tories at that time—and I've been here 13 years—who all but considered Speaker Stockwell a traitor.

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Oh, I did.

**Mr Christopherson:** I hear one of the current cabinet ministers saying, "Oh, I did." And of course that shows you the kind of dilemma our system places on any Speaker.

Not to the same degree by any stretch, but I have been in the chair as Deputy Speaker and had a very important ruling that actually came down one way or the other on my own caucus. I not only experienced that as a member of this place, but having sat in that chair I know how tough that can be. I also remember how I felt it was wrong of people like John Baird to feel that way. I also understand, having sat over there and at the cabinet table, that although the distance in the aisle is not that far, the viewpoint is light years apart.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Agreed.

**Mr Christopherson:** I hear my friend Minister Stockwell saying, "Agreed."

I think that's what we really have here, because I have no doubt in my mind—and this is the part, Chris, where you can start to get upset if you wish; I haven't even spoken and he's leaving already. But I have a funny feeling—and I think, Chris, you actually sat somewhere right about where I am, as I recall, about bang on, flinging the earpiece. Remember? I was sitting right there. You got really good at that too.

I can remember what he was like as an opposition member, and I can just imagine, Speaker, how Minister Stockwell would have reacted as MPP Stockwell of the third party had we, the Bob Rae government, done exactly the same thing, and that is move the budget from this place to anywhere else.

Speaker Brown, let me say to you that had the shoe been on the other foot, we'd still be peeling Chris Stockwell off the ceiling, he would be so outraged.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Indignant.

**Mr Christopherson:** Indignant. Outraged too, but "indignant" is a far more accurate word. And all of his colleagues too.

1700

I really think the government makes a huge error in shifting its focus to the motives of the Speaker. That's a loser unless we've got a Speaker—and we had a circumstance not that long ago. I won't go into details. It's not the prettiest chapter in the history of this place. We had a Speaker who did not have the support or respect of this House, and there were questions around motive in terms of decisions being made and things being said. That's not happening now. The only people defending this are the government, and I guarantee every one of you there that if you were over here, you'd be saying and doing exactly the same thing because it is outrageous. People are offended, and I think that's what you've failed to grasp, and I think that's why John O'Toole, for a short period of time anyway, is a household name in Ontario, and across Canada if you watch Newsworld. He's there often enough. It was because of both the actions he did, but it was the sneer on the face that really cinched it. I think that starts to show the separation of attitude and how this is viewed on the opposition side and out in the public versus that short little walk across the aisle from opposition to power. You have made a horrendous mistake.

I think Ian Urquhart is correct in saying that had you stood up at any point short of the ruling, or even right after, and said, "Do you know what? We screwed up big time. We apologize. We've learned from it. Nothing like that will happen again"—Ian is absolutely right: that would have gone an awfully long way. Instead, we have the spectre of John O'Toole on the front page of the *Toronto Star* giving off what is probably the most opposite message this government could possibly want on an issue of questioning contempt.

That's part of the difficulty we've had with this government. This is not new. I would be one who would acknowledge that for Speaker Carr—this is only my opinion; I don't know this for sure, but I suspect that although this decision alone stands on its own and his ruling stands on its own, I have no doubt in my mind. The Speaker got here at exactly the same day I did, as did former Speaker Stockwell, so I have a pretty good idea of what his experience is and what his memories are of this place and what it means, its history and its tradition, and the fact that, yes, sometimes things change, but that, yes also, some things ought not to change. I have no doubt in my mind that his ruling in part reflected his experience, ranging from disappointment all the way to outrage at some of the actions this government has taken against this institution, this people's House and the rules therein.

I'll give examples. Not long after this government was elected and took power, they brought in the infamous Bill 26. I see my friend John Baird rolling his eyes and groaning.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I thought it was Bill 7 you were talking about.

**Mr Christopherson:** No, I won't go to that one, one of the draconian bills. We'll come back to that another time.

This is about the procedures of the House, Minister. Bill 26: the government brought in a massive omnibus

bill, massive, and they brought it in a couple of weeks before Christmas—no public hearings outside of this place, as I recall. I'm going from memory now but I don't think they were offering or doing any hearings outside of this place, and they were very truncated. The whole thing happened closer to Christmas than the first of the month, and obviously the intent was—you don't have to be a political scientist to figure out that what they were hoping to do, with everybody preoccupied with the coming Christmas season and the opposition upset anyway about a whole lot of things the new government had done, they would be able to get it in under the radar. That act alone was indicative of your attitude.

But it's important when we look at this to remember the number of things in that bill that removed debate from this House and put it into the cabinet room. By that, I mean the number of areas in Bill 26 where it no longer took the House to change a law; it could be changed in cabinet, by way of regulations, done in secret. Now I say again, I've been in the cabinet room. I've been part of those secret discussions. I'm not questioning whether or not they're done behind closed doors. That is the way that our parliamentary system works. That's not the issue.

But the fact of the matter is that there's a world of difference between a cabinet minister standing up in this place and saying, "I am moving the following bill and changing the following laws," versus a recommendation that goes to cabinet from that same cabinet minister and they debate it in cabinet, and the only thing we find out about, as the public, is what their decision was after the fact, with no recourse.

Ultimately, it took Alvin Curling, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River, to refuse to vote, who in so doing held up the whole place. We already had this planned ahead of time. I'll tell you how bad it was, how serious the crisis was: Liberals and New Democrats were working together. That really doesn't happen very often. But we did have that in place, because we felt we had to do something. We expected the Sergeant at Arms to march over and ask Mr Curling to leave. So what we did was we threw a human wall around him, New Democrats and Liberals, and said, "No. With respect, Sergeant, unless you're planning to use force, you're not going to get to our colleague." I have to say too, for the history books, he was terrific. He was honourable. He did everything he should have done, but he certainly didn't cross that line. Because there was no call at that point or anywhere near there for any kind of violence whatsoever—none whatsoever. What we were doing was within the rules of this place, to the extent that there were rules to deal with it, and we were using those rules to try to make our point.

Speaker, why have I gone into such great detail? The reason is that one of the questions the public asks is, "How could the Tories think they could get away with it? Why would they do this and think they could get away with it?" With the greatest respect to the electors of this province, to the media who watch this place—and I guess

to some degree we're the opposition; we're supposed to lead and ensure that these things don't happen. So I blame us, too. But we let it happen. When Bill 26 happened, the people of the province should have been outraged. When this government stopped doing public hearings with bills and committees—and we can almost point out the time; the current House leader of the official opposition and I, when I was the House leader for our caucus, could identify the moment when the committee system in this province and in this Legislature died.

Where's the public? If you want to know why the government thought they could get away with this, then ask yourself, why wouldn't they? Look what else they've done, and they got away with it. Why wouldn't they think they could get away with this? A lot of people would call some of the things the opposition have complained about, in terms of what I just talked about—legislation versus regulation, the ability to take bills out into committee, the willingness to have an honest, open debate in this place and allow some time for that, allow each of us enough time to reflect the views of our constituency and our home communities—most of the time it was just written off as inside baseball, and often that can be an accurate accusation. But in this case we failed, as opposition members, to make the case to the public and the media about why what was going on was the slippery slope away from democracy as we know it in this place.

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There are reasons why Ontario is the greatest place in the world to live, and a large part of that is our democracy, the stability of our political system, the fact that, by and large, most people do accept that there is a legitimate structure of governance, even if they don't always like the people within that structure. This government has eaten that away, step by step, rule change by rule change and, at the end of the day, it feels like we've lost a big part of what this place is. And it has to stop. Speaker Carr feels that—I believe that—in his bones, that damage has been done, that somebody has to do something. He did that, and we are now holding you accountable. You did this because you thought you could get away with it; that's why you did it. You don't have enough people in that caucus and in your staff—I say very directly to people in the Premier's office and ministers' offices that I don't even know—associated with this government who feel and understand this place and understand democracy. You cannot rip democracy away because it suits your political needs.

And you finally got stopped. I don't know what the ultimate vote is going to be on Sean Conway's motion, or on my friend Gilles Bisson's amendment. I'm not sure that it matters all that much. Quite frankly, there's an election coming. I've got to tell you that I sure hope there's a minority government. I think this province desperately needs a recalibration. I know from my experience in this place that the only way those rules—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Christopherson:** Well, don't get too cocky over here in the Liberal caucus because I have no more faith



that you're going to change the rules with a majority government than they will. Oh, you'll change some that you proclaim, but I'd feel a lot more comfortable with a minority government because that's where the opposition will have the ability to take back some of the power and authority and influence that rightfully belong within this place, and the rights that members have.

I heard a cabinet minister talk earlier. She got up and said that it was a privilege to speak here. Then she went on and spent a whole lot of time thanking a lot of people. I thought maybe she'd got an award here today before I arrived. But anyway, she said what a privilege it was. Well, I'm going to tell something to all the government members: there are privileges and rights and respect that the opposition deserves to have returned to them, and when those rights are returned back to opposition members, they are *de facto* returned to the people of Ontario. That's the anger, and that, John O'Toole, is why the sneer seals the deal, because it shows the contempt, the lack of respect for this place and what it means.

In closing, I would just ask members to look around the world at how many people are still struggling, ordinary working people, professionals, academics, people from all walks of life still, in this day and age, putting their very lives on the line, the existence of their families on the line around the world, to have one crumb of the democracy that we have in this place. It would be wrong for this Speaker, Speaker Carr, and this opposition to allow this government to continue to take away those democratic rights. You are in contempt. It is contemptuous to do what you have done and take the attitude you have. Change must happen.

**Mr Beaubien:** It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on the motion from my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. As the member for Nipissing talked about tradition and read the definition of tradition from a dictionary, I'm not going to go back over that, but I would like to concentrate on tradition in this House, and also respect.

Directly dealing with the motion or the directive from the Speaker, according to the Speaker, the budget speech papers were properly filed with the Clerk. In his ruling on May 8, 2003, on page 231 of Hansard, the Speaker mentions that tradition in this House had already been broken in 1988 and 1993. He also talks about the meaning of contempt, and I will quote the Speaker directly from page 232:

"Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence. It is therefore impossible to list every act which might be considered to amount to a contempt, the power to punish for such an offence being of its nature discretionary...."

According to the Speaker, on page 233, "As I've already indicated, there have been occasions in the past

when a Minister of Finance or a Treasurer has neither personally presented the budget in the House nor read the budget speech in the House."

But in his ruling, Speaker Carr does not mention contempt with regard to those occasions.

Let me share with you some of the comments that I received from the riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. There is no doubt that we received calls in the office from people who were adamant with regard to the location of the speech, from Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats, but I have to balance the calls we received, because we received more calls, again from Conservatives and Liberals—I'm not sure about New Democrats—as to the content. People were more concerned as to the content of the budget speech as opposed to the location of the speech. So for the constituents in my riding who were opposed to the location of the budget speech, I apologize for that, if they were offended. However, they also have to respect the position on the other side of the story, because that is democracy.

We have been debating this issue for the third day. I'm sure there will probably be 102 members who will speak to this issue and we'll probably get 150 different opinions, because that's the reality of the democratic process.

For those of you who may not know, Speaker Carr is a very good hockey player. He's played a lot of hockey. I've had the opportunity to play with him and he's an excellent hockey player. I know that over the years the Speaker has always respected the referee and has always considered the referee impartial. I would like to quote from a speech entitled "The Role of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly" by Gary Carr, MPP for Oakville. In the closing line of his speech he says, "The role of the Speaker is one that transcends partisanship and lies at the very foundation of our democratic parliamentary heritage."

The motion from the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke seems to be disconnected from the ruling of the Speaker. However, I want to go back, like I said in the initial stages of my speech, and talk about tradition. I want to go back to the November 15, 1984, Hansard. It says:

"Television in Legislature

"Mr Bradley moved, seconded by Mr Wrye, resolution 40:

"That in the opinion of this House, electronic video Hansard should be installed in the chamber to provide coverage of all proceedings in the House in addition to that provided at present by the written and electronic media."

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He goes on further to say: "The arguments in favour of the implementation of electronic video Hansard in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario are many and compelling. The arguments against such an initiative are clearly self-serving on the part of the government and without merit with respect to providing the maximum information to viewers in order that they might have as much access to the legislative process as possible."

Further on he says: "It is often said that Canadians do not have as much knowledge of the legislative process and the workings of government as they should have in order to make political judgments and to influence their representatives in a positive and measurable way. The televising of the proceedings of the Ontario Legislature by TVOntario and by other networks that might be interested could result in an increased awareness of the legislative process and a better understanding of the issues with which legislators must deal."

He also says a little bit later on, on page 4152 of Hansard, "While the reluctance of the government to approve this initiative is understandable, what is disconcerting is the opposition of some members of the press gallery and the representations made to the Board of Internal Economy on behalf of this group."

One piece I found quite interesting, and I'll quote Mr Bradley, was: "Perhaps a piece written by freelance columnist Eric Dowd captures the issue as well as any column I have seen on this issue. Let me quote from this article of June 29, 1983. According to Mr Dowd: 'Cameras do lie, frequently. Most days in the Ontario Legislature there are cameras from eight or nine television networks or stations taping parts of the proceedings, but it would be difficult to claim they provide a comprehensive, and therefore accurate, picture of what goes on.'"

So it's interesting to find that there are different opinions. Again in the transcripts: "As Speaker Jerome stated so well in summation: 'Democratic government means government in view of the public. In present-day society, this means television, for television is the medium through which the public sees major events.'"

Let's look at what's happened since 1984. We have fibre optics and wireless technology today, which we did not have then. We have the Internet, which was not available in those days. And whether it was right or wrong, there's no doubt that we were trying as a government to use different means of communicating the message to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

While we're talking about tradition in this House, a number of years ago most members wore jackets and ties. Today, we see people without ties, and I think that's their personal decision. But again, it's going against tradition, it's not the custom that we used to have in this House.

As I pointed out, there was quite a heated debate, and I'll go back to some of the clips in the newspapers with regard to cameras that were installed in the Legislative Assembly back in 1986. Again, that went against custom, that went against tradition, and as the last speaker from across the way mentioned, there is no doubt that during a filibuster a few years ago something happened in this Legislative Assembly that was against custom.

Let me go back to an editorial or column in the *Globe and Mail* of November 15, 1997. It is written by—it doesn't say. It says, "Back in the dear, dead days when TV cameras were not allowed in the Ontario Legislature there was an institution known fondly as the scrum."

It goes on further and says, "Basically, despite the fact that television cameras have been allowed in the House since March, 1976, the Legislature of Ontario is not being televised...."

"There is no continuous coverage that would have enabled the cable channel, for example, to give live coverage to last week's important debate on raising the drinking age. There are no late-night reruns of the entire question period, no weekend roundups of House highlights, no videotape available for use by the parties or local stations interested in their own member...."

"Perhaps it's time to do things properly. If the Ontario Legislature is serious about televising its proceedings, then it is going to have to abandon the present half-hearted system and bring in its own electronic Hansard."

Here's an article again by Orland French in the *Globe and Mail* of November 30, 1982. He says, "You'd think it would be easy enough for TVOntario to stick a few lights and a couple of cameras in the Legislature. Not so. Seven years after the Camp commission recommended televising of the Ontario Legislature, committees have piled up study after study after study. And we're no closer now to TV in the Legislature than we were in 1975...."

"NDP leader Bob Rae says, 'I think it's crucial to guarantee public access. It would allow all members to get their messages across and would contribute greatly to public knowledge....'

"Former Speaker Jack Stokes, a New Democrat, says, 'There's a need for us to communicate much more effectively with the eight and a half million people in Ontario. It would improve the conduct and raise the level of debate in the Legislature.'"

So article after article. There was a tremendous debate back in 1986, and started back in 1976, with regard to breaking tradition, with regard to televising the proceedings of this House. As I said, probably 102 members will speak today or in the next few days—hopefully not all today, but some have spoken already in the past three days—and yet we're going to have different opinions, different angles on how people look at it. But that's democracy, that we are entitled to have a different spin, a different outlook on an issue. I have to respect my constituents' opinion when they say they did not like to see the budget speech given in an auto parts manufacturing plant. I respect that, but I also respect the opinion of the people who called and told me they were more concerned about the contents of the speech.

Here's another one I would like to share with you, another article by Orland French in the *Globe and Mail* of November 20, 1984. It says, "The Conservative government of Ontario was nine years old when television first hit the Canadian airwaves, in 1952. Three generations of television children later, the Conservative dinosaurs of Ontario herded together in the murky marsh of poor information and defeated a motion to install television permanently in the Legislature." It goes to show that sometimes we were against breaking tradition as a party also.



"The best of television technology is available to bring your MPPs live but asleep directly to your living room. The Tories won't have any part of it...."

"Ironically, the Ontario Legislature press gallery is on record as opposing electronic Hansard. Why the press would oppose another form of disseminating information may be difficult to grasp. The reason is rooted in paranoia. Television reporters fear that if electronic Hansard is brought in, they'll get the boot."

I must give credit to the press because they certainly were opposed to where the budget speech was given for the year 2003.

In an article by John Cruickshank of November 30, 1984, Jim Bradley says, "I see it as a matter of freedom of information to give the people of Ontario an unfettered and unedited version of the events in the Legislature." Again, we had pros and cons with regard to this particular issue.

1730

My colleague from Nipissing just gave me an article that appeared in the North Bay Nugget. I can't give you the date because I don't have it, but it's entitled "An Age of Shameless Politics." Speaker, I'd like to share this with you and the rest of the House and the constituents back home who may be listening to this debate today: "It's time for Ontario politicians to get over the made-for-TV budget kerfuffle and get on with the business of government."

"Outside of a few stuffy political science professors, opposition politicians and Speaker Gary Carr, nobody really cares where the budget was delivered."

"Holding the budget outside the Legislature wasn't the smartest move by the Tories—we don't agree with the format—but the debate has been dragging on for too long."

It goes on in this article: "Voters want the truth and government direction, not necessarily at Magna International...."

Speaker, I would like to address a few issues with regard to some of the issues you dealt with in the budget speech. I think there are a lot of people in the province of Ontario who would like this House to get on with the ordinary business of the House and debate the budget so that some of the initiatives that were introduced in the budget can be implemented, such as the tax credit for seniors whereby the education portion of their property taxes will be rebated. Now, I know the Liberals have an awful lot of difficulty in embracing this. But I've had an awful lot of seniors come to my constituency office and mention the fact that it's difficult for them to make ends meet with the small pension they live on.

**Mr Gerretsen:** You've made it difficult for them.

**Mr Beaubien:** The member from Kingston, who's very good at heckling all the time, doesn't listen very well. He probably never listens to his constituents. I hear the echo all the time from the member from Kingston.

For the people who would receive \$450 to \$475, and if that person is on a pension—I should point out Mrs Bell, who lives on Sixth Street in Petrolia, on a pension of

probably between \$11,000 and \$12,000. Let me tell you, the member from Kingston, Mrs Bell would certainly appreciate receiving the \$475 that this government is willing to give back to her. Do you know why? Because she's raised a family. She's worked hard all her life. She's paid her taxes. She's 82 years old. She lives in her own house. She's not costing the taxpayer a penny.

What is wrong with a government that does have a heart, some warm blood running in their veins, rebating that person that \$450? What is wrong with that? What have you got against that, member from Kingston? What have you got against that?

Talking about my constituency—I know the Navistar plant is not located directly in my constituency, it's in Chatham-Kent, but many of the people from my constituency work at the Navistar plant. This is a plant that's under the threat—the workers are voting today—of closing.

This government had the intestinal fortitude and the vision to look at putting \$625 million into the auto industry to retrain people, to make sure that the high-paying jobs in Ontario remain in Ontario. Why do we do this? Because without high-paying jobs, without viable economic activity in the province of Ontario, we would not have the level of health care that we have today. We would not have the education system that we have in place today. We would not be able to provide all the other programs that we're providing in Ontario. I realize that when you're spending \$70 billion to look after the needs of Ontarians, it's a lot of money, but as a government we are committed to that, and if we can get on with the debate of this budget, we will make sure that the people of Ontario benefit from it.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** I'm pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate on Mr Bisson's amendment to the motion presented by my colleague Mr Conway. I appreciate the fact that Mr Bisson's amendment is somewhat more provocative for the government than my colleague's very reasoned motion, which I had thought the government would endorse as a way of perhaps assuring the public that they were not going to repeat what was so obviously a political mistake, even if they don't appreciate the mistake in terms of their contempt of the Legislature. But Mr Bisson's amendment, from my perspective, calls the government for what it has done; that is, showing a very deliberate contempt for the Legislature.

In my view, this is a government that has no respect for the legislative process and no respect for the members of this Legislature, whether of the opposition or of its own party. Furthermore, this is a government that has absolutely no respect for the public we serve. This is a government that wants all the power that it can possibly take unto itself, and it is prepared to do anything it can get away with. This is truly contempt of a kind we have never experienced in this place before.

I'm perhaps not sounding terribly detached in approaching this debate, and I'll confess that's true. Even though I am retiring, I'm not detached from this debate.

I've committed some 16 years to public service in the Legislature of Ontario. I've done that because I believe it matters. I believe this is public service. I believe that what we do here can actually make a difference in the lives of people. I believe there is a responsibility on our part to reflect the diverse views, needs and perspectives of the people who have elected us. So I'm not detached. In fact, I'm angry.

I'm not just angry about what's happened in the province of Ontario in the last two months, because I see what has happened in regard to the faux budget and now in regard to this government voting itself, through cabinet, some \$37 billion to do with as it pleases, on the signature of two people. I see these actions as just the culmination of what has been a progressive, deliberate diminution of the role of this Legislature. It has been a consistent and, I say again, deliberate continuous exercise on the part of this government.

I know that my colleagues participating in this debate have talked about the fact that we went 128 days with no sitting. It does beg the question from members opposite who are getting up on behalf of their government trying to defend what is truly indefensible and saying, "We have other things we need to debate." We agree. We've waited since Christmas to come back to this Legislature so we could debate the issues that matter to people. So don't tell us that the need to debate other issues in any way justifies the arrogant, contemptuous actions of this government.

My colleagues have said, "You know, the record for this government—it's not just 128 days that we didn't sit since December; it's the fact that we've only sat an average of 78 days per year since this government took office." I know my colleagues have talked about the fact that this government uses closure on motions to cut off debate, that they've used closure on 60% of the bills they have presented. To compare that to old records, in 1985, closure was used on 1% of bills—60% of bills.

But those aren't even the issues that made me angriest and have probably kept me angry for the last eight years. What made me angriest was one of the very first actions of this government back in 1995. It was the introduction of something called the bully bill. I just want to refresh people's memories about the context of the bully bill, Bill 26. That was an omnibus bill, not just an omnibus bill with some little housekeeping details but an omnibus bill that significantly changed some 23 pieces of legislation. It was presented in this House while most members of the Legislature, particularly most members of the opposition, were in a budget lock-up. It was not a budget—this government uses the term "budget" too lightly, obviously—but a financial statement, and we were being given the privilege of seeing it in a lock-up, which, surprisingly, we were relieved from somewhat late.

By the time we got to the Legislature to hear the presentation in the Legislature—they were still reading statements in the Legislature back then—we found that this massive document had been tabled. That was the

document, with all its significance, that this government presented shortly before Christmas in 1995 and wanted passed before the Christmas break. This was the omnibus bill that my colleague Mr Curling had to sit overnight in the House in order to try to filibuster the government's ability to pass that bill before Christmas so we could at least get two weeks of hearings. That was one of the first actions of this government. Should we be surprised that, as they approach the end of their second term—and, we trust, the end of their mandate—this government has exercised this ultimate contempt of the Ontario Legislature?

1740

I'm not going to spend time getting into this so obviously—I can only say—pathetic defence, because I truly am getting lost for words to describe what's gone on here, that they had to present this budget speech outside of the Legislature because the Legislature wasn't sitting. Anybody who's following any of this knows the House was supposed to be sitting on March 17 and didn't come back. That was a pathetic first offer at a defence. It surprises me that members opposite are still trying to use it.

The second line of defence was even more shocking, though. The second line of defence used by the Premier himself was, "After all, nobody cares about this. Just opposition members and media types and a few policies wonks would ever care." Well, much to their surprise, people cared. They cared, quite frankly, beyond what I thought they might care, because too often we think that people have become truly cynical about what we do here and truly turned off, and wonder whether or not what we do does matter. Clearly people do value what we do here, they do respect the institution and they were angry with this government.

This government was in contempt of this Legislature because of what the Premier said. It was contempt to the people of Ontario because he said they don't care. He was in contempt of this place and of members because he said that we are just a barrier to communication, that they had to take the budget speech outside the Legislature because they wanted to communicate with the people. This is not a government that communicates; this is a government that advertises. That's what this presentation outside the Legislature was all about. How long do you have to be here to stop being a least a little bit naive? I was convinced when I heard that this budget speech was going to be presented in an auto parts plant owned by a strong Tory supporter, I thought, "That's not a budget. There's no way that's a budget; that's a campaign launch." Because I'm retiring, I cleared my office out and I turned the key in the lock and thought, "I'm heading home because the campaign's being launched tomorrow." It wasn't a campaign launch. It certainly wasn't a budget. It was a massive public relations exercise from a government that doesn't communicate, it advertises.

The government then talked about the fact that they couldn't call us back until the end of April because they



needed to consult. The agriculture minister today talked about all the consulting she was doing and that they couldn't possibly bring the House back on March 17. That's why they had to take the budget outside because they had to bring the budget in by the end of March, but we weren't sitting because the government was consulting. The government had three months to consult. Besides which, this is not a government that consults. I saw the throne speech consultation document. It was an advertising document. It was as much an advertising document as all of the \$600,000 worth of advertisements that the government has just recently launched as its pre-writ advertising blitz. The throne speech so-called consultation document was part and parcel of the pre-writ advertising blitz.

Is it any wonder that the public is growing more cynical? I believe we have to be genuinely concerned about a public that believes their vote doesn't matter because the voice of an individual member doesn't count for much. I genuinely believe that all of us who care about the democratic process and parliamentary democracy should, in fact, be looking to strengthen the role of individual members, to deal with that public cynicism, to make people believe that their vote does count.

The Speaker was clearly concerned about the direction this government has been going, and he said that when he brought in his judgment on a *prima facie* case of contempt. He said, and I'm not sure I'm quoting him exactly, "What's to stop other governments from taking more and more outside the Legislature?" He expressed his concern about the direction we were going, and I share his concern because I don't know how the continuously greater limitation on what legislators do in this place encourages the public to believe that what we do matters.

This government, this Harris-Eves government—and Mr Eves was a part of the Harris government for almost its entire term under Mr Harris's leadership—has taken executive power to heights never before contemplated. I have to say, and others have said it before, people inside the government backrooms, that this isn't even really the power of an executive of elected members; this is really the exercise of the power of backroom, non-elected people. That makes it even more frightening. But this is a government which has given itself, through its executive, incredible power to make laws without any public scrutiny at all. This government has been censured—perhaps as good a term as I can use—by more than one judge in court for its use of what is called in legal terms, perhaps parliamentary terms, the Henry VIII clause.

You'll know, Mr Speaker, that this whole debate is around the fact that one of the roles of Parliament, one of the reasons we exist is to serve as a check and balance on the power of kings. In today's day and age, with the Queen somewhat removed from direct involvement in the government of the country, it is to keep a check and a balance on the exercise of executive power. This government in bill after bill has given itself the power to make laws through regulation without recourse to the Legis-

lature. In fact, in two bills at least, this government sought to give itself the power to make changes in the laws themselves without recourse back to the Legislature. This government has given itself the power in virtually every piece of legislation it has passed to be held not liable in the courts for the action that it has taken, repeatedly giving itself executive power.

Today, quite beyond the Henry VIII clause, which gives the government almost unlimited regulatory power, and again regulations with the force of law that are not made public, the government has given itself spending power, spending power to the executive, of a magnitude—again—never before seen and surely not contemplated.

This government, the day before it presented its so-called budget at the Magna auto parts plant, just a few days after it decided not to bring the House back for a legislative sitting, decided that it would vote itself the power to spend almost \$37 billion of taxpayers' money. They did this with a special warrant which is normally used only for emergency situations and in times when the House is not sitting or is in an election, which this government clearly expected it to be in.

**Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio):** You know better.

**Mrs McLeod:** The member for Northumberland says I know better. I know better than to think that any government can give itself the executive power to spend \$37 billion of taxpayers' money without scrutiny by the Legislature of this province, let alone without approval of the Legislature of this province. That is completely unprecedented.

It was also deliberate, because in 2002, one year ago, the finance minister—who granted herself, with one other signature, the power to spend almost \$37 billion—introduced, and her government passed, an amendment to the Treasury Board Act that would allow the use of a special warrant to authorize spending in the fiscal year after the year in which the warrant had been issued. This government foresaw the intent to do exactly what they have done. From the time they took office they have deliberately, consistently, persistently set out to erode the power of the elected members of the Legislative Assembly, and what happened in the last two months is just the culmination of that.

There is so much I would like to say in a retrospective of eight years of government erosion of the role of the Legislature. I'd like to talk about committees and the fact that once upon a time within my lifetime in this place a committee was a place where we actually took a bill and examined it, considered it, really heard from people and took it back and amended it. I don't think that has happened in eight years to any significant degree. What's more typical is something like Bill 26, dating back to 1995, when it was so massive and there were such limited committee hearings that most of the clauses, significant changes to legislation, never even got addressed. Do you know how they work in committee now? They say, "We'll use closure. We'll get to a certain time, and if

we haven't considered the clauses by that time, you just put up your hand and vote for them or against them with no debate at all." That's the way they've run this place for the last eight years.

1750

I feel so strongly about this because I don't think we should take democracy lightly. Other people have talked about the fact that we didn't have to create a democratic process; we didn't have to create a parliamentary democracy; we didn't have to fight to put checks and balances on the power of the king. Others did that for us. We inherited the privilege of serving as members in a parliamentary democracy. We inherited 700 years of effort to define a parliamentary democracy.

In the few moments I have left, let me talk a little bit about it: in the 14th century it was decided to have no taxation without parliamentary consent; in the 15th century the Commons gained equal law-making powers with the lords; in the 17th century we saw a bill of rights establishing the authority of Parliament over the king that was enshrined in law, the principle of freedom of speech in parliamentary debates. In the 14th century, the 15th century, the 17th century: a slow evolution that was hard-won. It was won through revolution; it was won through people being prepared to go to war; it was won through people losing their heads. The parliamentary acts of the 20th century finally gave primacy to the House of Commons where we sit. Finally, over the course of 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century evolution, we achieved universal suffrage, where all men and women have an opportunity to vote so that we have government that is truly of the people, for the people and by the people.

I am angry at what I see to have been a consistent erosion of the ability of individual members elected by their constituents to play an effective role in governance. I am angry that this government uses as a defence that they need to communicate with the public. I would argue that no government can say that they have to bypass the elected representatives in order to communicate with the public. We are elected not only to communicate with our own publics, which we must do, remembering that communication is two-way—it means listening first and bringing views to this place—it's not just advertising at them, it's not just talking at them, it's not just telling them what you want them to hear; it's listening to our constituents and bringing their views back to this place. This is where the voice of constituents is heard.

You cannot communicate with the public by bypassing the voices of the elected representative. It's only through elected representatives that every citizen gets the right to have their views heard. That's why this has to be a place for debate. It has to be a place where dissent is allowed.

I'm not going to argue that there don't have to be changes to the democratic process and the way we run the Legislature. Obviously I feel that, after the changes of the last eight years. I have believed from the time I came into this place that we need to have more opportunity for true dissent in the Legislature. I sat as part of a caucus of

93 people, and we put our hands up to vote for government legislation on almost every issue. There's no way 93 of us felt the same way on every issue. I've argued for a long time that there should be a place where the diversity of views of the Ontario public is recognized. I don't think there's any loss of power for the governing party or for any leader if you allow dissent to be recognized. That's true communication. We are representatives of a large province with very diverse views, so we do need more true, free votes, as a Dalton McGuinty government would provide for.

What I feel saddest about tonight, approaching almost the end of not only my speaking time but the time of my service in the Ontario Legislature, is that instead of seeing more freedom for the expression of dissent, more opportunity for real debate, more opportunity for every member to effectively voice the views of their constituents and effect change through true deliberations on the legislation that's presented here, instead of that, we have seen such a limitation on hearing the voices of individual elected members. It would be very sad after 700 years to lose the parliamentary democracy.

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** I would just like to say at the outset that I do commend the service of the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. She has given totally dedicated, committed service, I believe, to her constituents. I've been privileged to be here during her entire service to her community and indeed to her party, both in government and opposition. I believe this member has served this chamber and her constituents well.

Although I appreciate there are only about four minutes left this afternoon, I would just like to say a few words on this subject. I really wish, first of all, that it was possible in some ways for all of us to look at ourselves individually on absolutely every subject that comes before this chamber. All of us don't always have that opportunity and sometimes—I know, believe me, because I served in opposition for 10 years, and for eight years I've been privileged to serve on the government side of the House. I think in the combination of both of those roles, I've learned to recognize what is deliberate and what intentions are. It certainly was never the intention in any way at all, nor was it deliberate, that this government would do anything but the best for the people of Ontario.

The best is presented in the budget itself. The best is all of the things—and I wish there was time for me to highlight some of the things in this budget that we could be debating at this point. We could, in fact, talk about the important things in this budget that affect people's everyday lives in this province. Instead, we are discussing a process. Ironically, in that process over the last three days, I have seen a deterioration of respect for each other in this chamber.

**Mr Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora):** No, no.

**Mrs Marland:** If something really upsets me, it's when we lose respect for each other, I say to the president of the Ontario Liberal Party, who is now heckling.



The most important thing is that we recognize we all have a role to play in this Parliament. We are elected to represent the interests of our people. The people who elect us expect us to come here and serve with dignity and pride in the opportunity of service. When we lose that respect for each other within this chamber, wherever we sit, we lose respect for the institution of Parliament, and we certainly lose respect for ourselves.

To try to say there was an intent for anything other than informing the public about the intentions of our government as it pertained to the budget, I personally feel very strongly that was wrong. To try to say that we had anything but the best intentions—you've heard the

arguments that the budget was tabled in the Legislature. You've heard that there was the usual lock-up, there was all the usual access to the content of the budget that there has been, I may say, in every year except one, since I've been here, and that one year was not when the Conservatives were the government.

When I think about what we could be talking about in this chamber in terms of the announcements of funding for children—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Please sit down. It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 14 May 2003

Mercredi 14 mai 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 14 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 14 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

**Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask if we could receive unanimous consent that each party might make a short statement on community living.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there a specific time for the short statement—any time requirement?

**Hon Mr Galt:** I'm asking for approximately 90 seconds per caucus.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** It gives me great pleasure to announce that today is Community Living Day. We have in the audience members of the community living community, and I am particularly pleased to sponsor their annual Community Living Day here at Queen's Park to promote awareness of the wonderful work the Ontario Association for Community Living does for those who are developmentally handicapped. I am particularly pleased and proud to recognize Community Living Day. Joining us today in the Legislature are guests from Community Living Ontario.

Community Living Month is an opportunity to increase public awareness about people with developmental disabilities and the significant contribution they make to society. It's also an opportunity to acknowledge all the dedicated people who work in the developmental services sector. I want to recognize our government's commitment to supporting vulnerable people in Ontario. I'm particularly proud to introduce all the members who are here today. I believe this House should join in welcoming them warmly.

*Applause.*

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I am pleased to have an opportunity to rise and recognize that this is Community Living Week and today is Community Living Day. We are very pleased and honoured that various representatives from across the province who are part of community living associations in their communities have taken the time to come here to Queen's Park to speak with members of provincial Parliament to continue to press with us issues that are very real for the people they work with and on whose behalf they advocate.

I would say to the members of the government, as we recognize the very fine efforts put forward by people

involved with community living associations across the province, that it is time the government stepped up to the plate to provide some real assistance for people with disabilities, people with whom the associations live. The government has indicated in its throne speech that there will be an increase, but we don't know what that increase is going to be. We know that there need to be increased supports, assisted living supports, for persons with disabilities. We know that people living on Ontario disability have a very low threshold for savings. A parent came to me last night and suggested that they can't even prepay the funeral of their child because of the threshold. That's considered an asset for the person who is disabled.

We have a lot of work to do. Listen to what these people have to say.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I also want to offer my sincere congratulations, and the congratulations and thanks of our caucus here at Queen's Park, to Community Living Ontario and to all the community living associations across the province. I want to say to the workers in those associations that they deserve our thanks and our congratulations as well, because together you do a tremendous job. You have a sacred trust and you rise to the occasion in spite of the fact that you have less than adequate resources coming to you from this government.

I want to particularly pay respect today to my own community living association, Community Living Algoma, and the CUPE workers, who just yesterday resolved a very difficult labour dispute and will be back to work in the next day or two to provide the services that I know they all want to provide to my constituents and my citizens who live with developmental challenges every day of their lives.

I call on this government to also rise to the occasion. In Sault Ste Marie it was obvious that the reason for that strike was the lack of resources over the years to that association to provide the services, the accommodation and all the other things those folks deserve and need to lead lives of dignity and quality in the communities in which they live. They deserve every opportunity, the same as the rest of us, to work in the community and to have housing that's affordable and of a quality that speaks to their inherent dignity.

Today, again I thank those folks across the province who do this, such important work for all of us, for those very vulnerable and at-risk citizens.

## MOTIONS

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek the unanimous consent of this House to sit next week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Government House leader.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I need consent to adjourn this debate for the purpose of seeking unanimous consent to moving a motion to seek unanimous consent to sit Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week, without debate, and immediately go back into the present situation.

**The Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed.

A point of order, the member for Windsor-St Clair.

**Mr Duncan:** My point has been addressed, Mr Speaker.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a)(i), the House shall meet on Tuesday, May 20, Wednesday, May 21 and Thursday, May 22.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 13, 2003, on the amendment to the motion by Mr Conway arising from the Speaker's ruling of May 8, 2003.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Resuming the debate, the government had the floor. Seeing none, further debate?

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** I'm pleased to participate in this debate today to emphasize not only how this government has acted in contempt of this Legislature but in other ways beyond that. It ties into your ruling, Mr Speaker, very much so, on the lack of respect that the Harris-Eves government has for us as elected officials.

I'm going to start my presentation today with a quote from John Ibbitson's *Loyal No More*.

1340

"On the last day of the 1999 campaign, a handful of desultory Tory protesters greeted him at a party rally in Orillia. Harris appeared to ignore the jeers of the demonstrators as he made his way to his campaign bus, but, as he stepped into the coach, he suddenly turned and waved. The protesters howled in impotent defiance. Harris waved back, his ear-to-ear grin an unmistakable declaration of victory—and derision. This was the real Mike Harris: confident, arrogant, determined to win at all costs, contemptuous of his enemies."

I want to talk today a bit about some of the contempt that this government is showing for us in this Legislature

as democratically elected individuals. We hear over and over again about "the Eves government." This is not the Eves government that the 103 of us here are representing. This is the Ontario government. This is a government that represents, and a Legislature that belongs to, the people of this province, but unfortunately we've seen over and over again how the relevance of this most important building has been undermined. We've seen in your own ruling, Mr Speaker, how the relevance of this building has been undermined by the budget being taken outside of the Legislature. We've seen again the contempt of this Legislature and the contempt for yourself from the member from Oshawa. I think that that picture of that member is going to resonate with people all across this province because that's the attitude that this government has: sticking the finger out at the people of Ontario. It may have been directed at one of the honourable members in here, but it went beyond that. It was a portrayal of the contempt that this government has for the citizens of this province. It's the contempt of this government of, "If you didn't vote for us, be darned with you." It's a terrible attitude.

I want to talk, though, about some of our rights and something that every one of us in this Legislature should be concerned with: the contempt that exists for the democratically elected individuals here. I'm going to cite some examples.

The first one that I choose to cite is an issue that's in my riding right now. It deals with the deer hunt and whether or not to allow the use of shotguns. We've had a traditional hunt in this riding that only has allowed muzzle-loaders since 1978. Yet for some reason, the bureaucracy wants to allow the introduction of shotguns. I commend individuals like Dave Snook and Bob Bishop, who have come to me to make me aware of this issue and the concern that they have over the loss of this traditional hunting opportunity, and the concern that's been expressed out there by landowners.

As I've been dealing with this issue, I've been dealing with the minister's office, as I rightfully should be. A little over a week ago I had a call from an individual to tell me that the PC candidate has suddenly got himself involved in this. I thought it was quite odd. How could the PC candidate get himself involved? Lo and behold, I find out that Al Pyette, the MPP liaison, who is supposed to represent every one of us, picks up the phone, doesn't talk to the MPP who's democratically elected; he talks to the Tory candidate. That's wrong.

Then it continues on this issue of a letter that was written on May 1 from the Ministry of Natural Resources. The district manager writes to a constituent about an issue dealing with the change in designation in WMU 92. This is where I'm very concerned, and we all should be concerned, that the bureaucracy in this province is becoming politicized as well. Not only is this a political environment that we're in, but the bureaucracy is now becoming politicized, and it never used to be. It's wrong. The bureaucracy should not be political.

I'll quote from this letter: "The district has identified concerns...in your letter....The Ontario Conservative



government has spoken out against the federal firearms legislation." Not the Ontario government; the "Ontario Conservative government."

I'll continue with this letter, which really troubles me when I look at who it's cc'd to. It's cc'd to Steve Peters, MPP, Elgin-Middlesex-London; rightfully so. It's cc'd to—I won't even name his name—to the PC candidate, Elgin-Middlesex-London. Cc'd on a piece of government document. I just find that a terrible undermining of my democratic rights.

I want to talk about another issue, again how they undermine us. Last Saturday, Minister Hardeman was in my riding to make a very important water announcement. Did this government have the courtesy to contact the democratically elected individual? No, again they showed their contempt for this Legislature. If it hadn't been for a little birdie who called me on Friday night and said, "Are you going to be at the announcement?", I wouldn't have known about it. I think that's contemptuous of this government, that they would direct that at an individual member and not invite a member.

We'll continue on. This one's a real kicker. Again, contempt for the Legislature: a funding announcement in my riding sent to the Elgin County Public Library announcing \$29,000 for the Early Years child fund, congratulating the county on the money and saying how the candidate strongly encouraged the honourable minister to approve this money. This is the Tory candidate on his own campaign literature announcing government money, and I think that's contemptuous of this Legislature and all of us as individual members, that we as individuals are being bypassed.

Here's another media release from the Elgin-Middlesex-London Provincial PC Association, welcoming the grant to support the victims of domestic violence in St Thomas-Elgin—a press release announcing a \$30,000 donation. But what really troubles me is that now this starts to show the contempt not only for the elected officials, but the contempt that is existing within the bureaucracy of this province, because the bureaucracy of this province didn't notify the local member of this grant. The bureaucracy is using a Tory candidate as the vehicle to make a government funding announcement. I think that is extremely wrong.

I want to point back to the Early Years challenge fund. The county of Elgin was so disturbed by this letter that they sent it to me so that I could be aware of it, because they were not impressed that the government would bypass a local member and go through a Tory candidate to make a funding announcement.

Let's cite some other examples of contempt that exists of this government. We saw recently the announcement in Scarborough of the hiring of 1,000 new police officers. Who is standing in the background of that photo opportunity? Not elected officials who represent the Toronto area; there were some elected officials—no opposition members—yet there were Conservative candidates standing in the background.

Let's talk about another example where this government shows its contempt for the democratically elected

individuals in this province. In April, the Minister of Tourism visits the riding of Sarnia-Lambton and goes to announce a grant of money. Do they have the courtesy to let the honourable member know that they're coming to town? No, they don't. Again the contemptuous nature of this government, again how it ties in with the ruling that you made and how we're seeing this very fine and most important facility undermined.

Let's look at the nutrient management hearings that took place back in February in the municipality of Leamington. This is the final speakers' list of those individuals who could make presentations for those hearings. This is a speakers' list that was not determined by people on the ground; this is a speakers' list that was determined by the ministry's staff.

We've heard the Minister of Agriculture stand up and talk about how much they consult and how hard they work at consultation, yet when you hear this it will just blow you away, how they're prepared to put the interests of the PC party first and the interest of the farmers of Ontario second. Who's listed on this list produced by the government? One of the presenters is a gentleman—I won't name his name either—listed as the PC candidate, and the PC candidate bumps out such organizations as the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Kent Federation of Agriculture, Ridgetown College, concerned citizens, vegetable growers, farmers, farmers, farmers. PC candidate—two candidates there, plus two elected members who were disregarded; another example of the contempt that exists in this province.

### 1350

Let's talk a bit about this so-called throne speech consultation that took place. Again it shows the contempt that exists out there. The Minister of Agriculture was in my riding doing throne speech consultation with my constituents, farmers I've developed a good working relationship with and who I believe have been in many ways abandoned by this government. Does the honourable minister have any respect for the democratically elected member when she comes into the riding? No, she doesn't. She holds invite-only, behind-closed-doors secret consultation meetings—it sounds very much like the old Ontarians with Disabilities Act consultations. Do they invite the democratically elected member? No, they don't.

The throne speech consultation continues when one of the honourable members, Mr Dunlop, visits the riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. Do they notify the local member and involve the local member in the throne speech consultations? Of course, they don't. But they point out very clearly that the Conservative candidate for that riding was at those throne speech consultations—again, undermining her credibility.

Again, back in February—the sad politicking that takes place in this province—the Minister of Health puts out a press release talking about the Conservative members in the Niagara area and their efforts at working with the dispatch services in the Niagara area. He includes in his press release the sitting members, which is fair game.

But he includes in his press release the Tory candidate in St. Catharines, undermining the democratically elected individual who represents the riding of St. Catharines.

Here's another one, an event that took place back in February. This one is actually on the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines' Web site. This was an announcement of \$750,000 being put into the riding of Thunder Bay for agricultural research. In this big photo of the announcement is the local PC candidate. Did they have the courage and conviction to invite Michael Gravelle, the democratically elected member? No, they didn't. Did they invite Lyn McLeod? No, they didn't. But on their own Web site, they're prepared to put a photo of a Tory candidate; again, total disregard.

Speaker, I think this underlies much of your ruling, showing how provincial dollars are being used not only to make government announcements—and that's acceptable—but how provincial dollars are being used to prop up Tory candidates around this province. I think it's contemptuous of this Legislature that they would do that.

I would say to every one of you in this room: ask yourself, "Why am I here?" I think every one of us is here because we want to make a difference in this province. Some of us have come from different roots. Many of us, like myself, have served our apprenticeship at the municipal level; have gone through municipal government and come here because we want to continue to serve and represent the people of our province.

As a municipal politician, I had a lot of respect for this facility. I respected this place and the role the provincial Legislature plays in dictating policies and programs for municipalities in this province. Did we always agree with the provincial government? No. Quite honestly, I've lived through three provincial governments and all three of them treated municipal governments like dirt, and that's a real problem.

But we're here to represent our constituents. We get undermined, as we come to this facility, in dealing with such things as the budget. I think it's important that we understand the role of the Legislature. The important part of this job is to legitimize government decisions. When the elected representatives of the people meet in the Legislature and debate the issues of the day, the Legislature provides the outlet for the expression of different points of view and the opinions of the electorate we represent. The most important responsibility of this Legislature is to provide a public forum in which actions of the government are to be examined and scrutinized. Those opportunities to examine and scrutinize the government in dealing with this budget have been undermined by the fact that this budget was not tabled in this Legislature.

I would encourage the members—as we were elected, we all received this procedural briefing book. You should have a look at it, because some of you, I think, forget what we were elected to do. It talks about how a bill is introduced—it is introduced in the assembly for first reading—and the debate process that one follows. It talks about substantive motions that this Legislature needs to

deal with, and in talking about substantive motions, examples of such motions include the budget motion. Read the book that was prepared for each one of us as elected individuals.

We've heard a lot of attacks on the Speaker. I think it's appalling, the attacks we've heard directed at the Speaker because, my colleagues, we should realize that the Speaker is, in parliamentary terms, the most important member in the Legislative Assembly, as he presides over the debate and is the guardian of our historical rights and privileges. The Speaker is an individual whom we should be treating with respect, yet we see contempt day after day in this Legislature directed at the Speaker. There's something seriously wrong with that.

The loyalty of the Speaker is not to any political party; the loyalty of the Speaker is not to unelected backroom party hacks; the loyalty of the Speaker is to the 103 members here in this Legislature and to ensure that we do things in a way that is going to be in the best interests of the citizens of Ontario. That is being undermined. You are continuing to undermine the Speaker in the important role that the Speaker plays on our behalf.

Let's talk a bit about accountability. Some of you should spend some time going down to the legislative library. The legislative library does a wonderful job providing services for us as elected officials. In one of the papers that they presented, they talk about accountability and how the accountability of this House for the expenditure of public funds and the effectiveness and the management of government have been predominant concerns of politicians and public administrators for several decades. The question of fiscal accountability and how the government of the day is responsible for effective expenditure of public funds and ensuring that we get value for our money: that has been undermined.

We continue to see wastes of money with these propaganda pieces that continue to come out and flood into our mailboxes—\$400 million in propaganda. How many further millions in TV ads and newspaper ads? Quite honestly, I think the public is sick of receiving this and seeing the waste of taxpayers' money, and there's the latest one coming up right now: Maclean's magazine, Office of the Premier, 30 pages. Let's recycle it; let's recycle this government. It's time for a change in this province. It's time to put a government in place that's going to have respect, not only for the Speaker but for the Legislature, the citizens of Ontario and elected officials. This is a government that shows contempt for elected officials.

I want to close with some quotes from Hansard in 1993. This is about the so-called budget.

"I was rather astounded today, when ministerial statements were read, that there was not one by the Treasurer...of Ontario. I cannot recall another time in the history of the province of Ontario when a mini-budget has been introduced by a government and not introduced in the Legislature of Ontario."

Ernie Eves said that in 1993, how disgusted he was that the NDP government didn't introduce that budget in



the Legislature, and he has the gall to stand up and defend the process that's taking place right now. This government is bent on undermining the democracy of this province. Speaker, I thank you for standing up for this Legislature and standing up for the people of Ontario.

**The Speaker:** Just before we carry on, we have with us in the Speaker's gallery a former member of the House of Commons, Mr Jesse Flis. Please join me in welcoming our special guest and colleague.

1400

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Today, by all accounts we should be debating the government's budget. We should be raising the issues and concerns of people across Ontario in the context of the government's budget. But the government didn't have the courage to present a budget in the Legislature. Instead, they produced a television infomercial in a car parts facility. So instead of debating the important issues of a budget—how money shall be raised, invested and spent in the province—we are in the fourth day of a debate over a motion regarding this government's contempt for the Legislature and, I would argue equally, its contempt for the people of Ontario.

Today, in the context of this debate, I want to raise one of the issues that we really should be debating and which I believe this government has shown contempt for, not only through its television infomercial but through its unwillingness to tackle the issue. Today I would like to introduce the members of the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario Trusteed Pension Plan, who are in the gallery. These former employees of farm and dairy co-operatives located all over Ontario worked hard all their lives and thought they could count on a modest income in their retirement years from their employers' pension plan, but, tragically, that is not turning out to be the case. Their pension plan has been fatally damaged by a risky investment strategy gone terribly wrong, accompanied by an almost complete breakdown in the regulation of pensions in this province. In fact, just this month all members of the plan have seen their already very modest pension benefits cut in half, while an actuarial consultant decides on the best way of legally winding up the plan and distributing the remaining assets left in the plan.

Last February, Gilles Bisson and I alerted the Conservatives to problems with Ontario pension plans and the legislation that regulates them. We called for a royal commission to examine the current state of pensions and what was needed to strengthen them in the future. Our aim was to provide stability for retirees. We believe that people who work hard all their lives and contribute to pension plans in good faith should be able to enjoy a secure and dignified retirement. The Conservatives ignored the issue then and, from what we saw of their television infomercial, they intend to ignore the issue now and show contempt for these retirees and other retirees across the province.

This is a government that has ignored the growing problems in pension plans, and we see the result here

today. The collapse of the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario Trusteed Pension Plan has affected 2,300 people in every part of Ontario. Some 2,300 retirees have seen their pension incomes cut in half, while other costs such as hydroelectricity, gas, rent and food continue to climb. The co-operative plan now has \$64 million in assets but has pension obligations of \$120 million.

The Financial Services Commission of Ontario, the government of Ontario's pension regulator, had ample warning of the problems with the pension fund's investment strategy but did nothing.

This government made mistakes, the plan trustees made mistakes and the investment manager made mistakes, but it is the people in the gallery today and thousands of others all over Ontario who are now paying the price. These people worked hard and played by the rules and they are paying for the mistakes of this government and its refusal to undertake the needed and meaningful pension reforms that we need to see in this province.

Pensioners have little recourse when this happens. This is especially a problem with multi-employer pension plans such as the Co-operatives pension plan because they are not covered by the pension benefits guarantee fund. Without a backup, they are sometimes at the mercy of incompetent investment managers protected by inadequate regulations. The government knows this, and yet they have refused to act, and in doing so have shown contempt for these very retirees, people like Don Slinger. Don is 81 years old, worked for United Co-operatives for 32 years and retired in 1982. It's because of this tragedy that today I repeat my call for a royal commission to look at all aspects of pension plans in Ontario.

New Democrats have some practical ideas for pension reform that can be implemented now. First, there needs to be pension backup for all pension plans in Ontario, including multi-employer pension plans such as the Co-op pension plan; portable pensions from job to job, so as people are forced to move from one employer to another, their pension plan travels with them, vesting from day one—that's what they have now in Quebec; the day you go to work is the day your pension plan vests and you carry it with you as you move through the workforce—and pensions geared to cost-of-living increases. These would be good first steps, but much more needs to be done to protect seniors, retirees and all those people who look forward to a secure retirement.

What exists now is a government pension regulatory disaster, because there's no backup for these kinds of multi-employer pension plans. People deserve the security of knowing that a pension will be there for them when they retire. New Democrats would reform pension laws and prevent pensions from being robbed by employers or inflation. We would implement pension backup for all Ontario pension plans and ensure that multi-employer plans are covered by the pension benefits guarantee fund. We would remove the contempt this government has shown for pensioners like our visitors today who are here from all over Ontario.

I want to elaborate for just a minute on what happened here. The investment manager in this particular case

engaged the pension fund in a very risky derivatives investment. Everyone knows that derivatives are risky at the best of times. Here was a pension plan that had a large number of people who were already retired and a large number of people who were slated to retire. Anyone would know that in that context investing in derivatives is especially risky.

What is worse is that the Financial Services Commission of Ontario knew this was happening. They knew, in the context of many people already being retired and many more people about to retire, that the investment manager was investing in possibly the most risky form of investment, and the financial services commission of this government did nothing. This happened between the years 1997 and 2000. That's when these very risky investments were made.

I know the government will say, "Why didn't some of the trustees of the plan take action?" Well, some of the trustees of the plan didn't know the risky nature of the investment that was being undertaken. So here we have several million dollars, of people who have worked hard all their lives, people who observed their responsibilities as citizens and taxpayers, who believed their pension investment was going to be financially supervised by the financial services commission and who believed, as this government has said, that if you play by the rules you should do all right. And what did they find out? A risky pension investment plan and the financial services commission of this government did nothing, even though they knew for over three years that this was happening.

**1410**

This is why we should be debating the government's budget here today. We should be holding the government to account for not including in that budget new pension reforms that would adequately protect these retirees and adequately protect retirees and those who look forward to retirement across this province. I just want to say in passing that this is but one symptom of the issues this government has shown contempt for and, frankly, has tried to ignore.

When I looked at the television infomercial that I saw announced, what did I hear the government saying they were going to do? They're going to provide property tax relief to Frank Stronach, who had an income of \$56 million, who lives in a \$10-million mansion. This government believes Frank Stronach needs government help to pay his property taxes. I say to this government, I think Mr Stronach has enough money to pay his own property taxes. If he wants to live in a \$10-million mansion, then he can certainly pay his own property taxes.

Where were you when these pensioners, these people who have worked hard all their lives, who played by the rules, who paid their taxes, who met their responsibilities, asked you to show some responsibility and take some accountability for an investment scheme that had clearly gone wrong? Where were you? Where were they? They were in a car parts facility in Brampton producing one of those made-for-TV infomercials, trying to spin out how a tax giveaway for Frank Stronach was somehow going to

address the needs of seniors across this province. How completely contemptuous.

I say to this government, I don't know why you haven't used the last four days here to once and for all bring in a budget and allow us to examine that budget. Why do you insist on, first of all, showing contempt for the Legislature, and then showing contempt for the people of Ontario? Instead of saying, "We made a mistake; we shouldn't have done this; let's get on with the real issues," you drag out this farce. You drag this out.

I suppose we should have noted from the documents that became clear yesterday that the government's real plan when they launched the television infomercial was to do the television infomercial and then call an election without ever facing any scrutiny in this Legislature, without facing any scrutiny from the media. That apparently was the plan: to produce a television infomercial, to spend \$36 billion of the public's money without submitting to the scrutiny of a budget or a budget process.

I say to the government, if you're not prepared to observe the rules, the conventions of our Constitution, if you are not prepared to observe the parliamentary process, a process that has been put together over generations by people who think long and hard about how we protect democracy and how we enhance democracy, then why don't you call the election tomorrow? Go out there and explain to these people and to other people across Ontario why it's more important for you to pay Frank Stronach's property taxes on his \$10-million mansion than to look after the legitimate needs of pensioners who've paid their way, who've lived by the rules and who've worked hard.

These pensioners have been treated unfairly, unjustly. I say to the government: in the time you have remaining, would you at least meet with this group of pensioners, would you at least look at the arguments they've put forward, would you at least consider the arguments they have put forward pointing toward alternatives that will give them a better result, a fairer result, a more just result than you're prepared to foist on them now? It seems to me that that would at least address some of the contempt you have shown so far.

Then you can argue your point on the hustings—that you believe it's really the Frank Stronachs of the world, the Steve Stavroses of the world, the Eugene Melnyks of the world who need help paying their property taxes—rather than address the legitimate needs of these retirees and other retirees like them for better pension regulation and pension reform in Ontario. Speaking for all New Democrats, I would be happy to take you on in that debate, because the Eugene Melnyks, the Steve Stavroses and the Frank Stronachs don't need your help; they don't need government's help; they don't need taxpayers' help. They've done very well, thank you, according to the regime that you've already put in place. But what about fairness for these retirees, and what about fairness for all the other people in this province who are trying to plan now for a retirement that has some income security? You've been silent on that issue. In fact, you've disappeared on the issue. You've tried to ignore the issue.



I say again to this government, what you should have brought forward, instead of your television infomercial, was pension reform that would have allowed Ontario to catch up to where other provinces are at already. Other provinces already provide for immediate vesting. Other provinces already provide for pension portability. Other provinces have already put in place at least partial indexing to protect pensions against inflation. Other provinces have already put in place pension governance legislation which would require the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to take action when they see this kind of risky investment scheme. Other provinces have already put in place other regulations which require better, fairer, more just pension governance. Where have you been? Looking after Frank Stronach; looking after someone who owns a \$10-million mansion, has a \$56-million income and wants more tax cuts. That's where your priority has been.

I just want to say I still think it's not too late for this government. It is not too late for this government to stand up and admit that you made a mistake. You made a horrendous mistake: your idea of defying 800 years of constitutional convention, your idea of ignoring 800 years of parliamentary process, to not present a budget before the people, to not present a budget before the elected representatives of the people and instead present a television infomercial in a car parts plant. It's not too late to say, "We were wrong." It's not too late to say, "We should never have done that." It's not too late to say, "We would never do that again." And it's not too late to recognize your real priority, the priority that we should be taking care of now: the needs of pensioners like these pensioners here today, the needs of other pensioners, the needs of other hard-working Ontarians who want to contribute to a secure pension fund, who want to know, when they retire—and most of them want to retire earlier rather than later—that they will have a secure income, who want to know that that income will be protected at least to a certain extent against the vagaries of inflation.

I wish the Minister of Finance were here today. In fact, I wish the Minister of Finance were prepared to meet with these pensioners. I wish the Minister of Finance were prepared to recognize the legitimate aspirations and the legitimate arguments that these pensioners have put forward. But I see that this government still hasn't learned its lesson. It still believes that it can listen only to the wealthy and the powerful. It still believes that it doesn't have to listen to the voices of ordinary people. It still believes it can show contempt for constitutional convention. It still believes it can show contempt for 800 years of British parliamentary development. You still believe that you can make the rules as you go along and that you can ride roughshod over the law, roughshod over constitutional convention and roughshod over the legitimate aspirations of ordinary people like this who have paid their taxes, who have worked hard and now deserve your legitimate attention.

1420

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I am pleased to

have the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment to the motion. At the outset, I would like to acknowledge, as did the capable member for Scarborough Centre, Community Living Day in Ontario. There are a lot of our friends here. The member for Scarborough Centre and I were able to attend a fundraising event for the Toronto Association for Community Living the other day, and I see Agnes Samler, Cay Shedden and Jesse Flis from the Toronto association, so I would like to particularly welcome them, as well as Chris Grayson from the Campbellford and District Association for Community Living, a pretty innovative group in Northumberland county, which I was able to visit with my colleague Doug Galt. So I say hi to them.

**Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** There's a great group from Oxford, from Tillsonburg.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm sure there are a lot of good representatives from Oxford, from Tillsonburg, as the minister tells me.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak in this debate. I think we can have a fair discussion about the evolving role of Parliament. It has changed in a very big way. There is a huge influence of mass communications, not just in Parliament and how it affects Parliament but also in how it affects government. We live in a 200-channel universe. We have more daily papers than we've had. We have instant access to the Web. We have 24-hour newscasts. We have 24-hour radiocasts. No longer is there a 24-hour news cycle; there is in fact a news cycle that demands instant reaction, almost to the hour, if not the minute. The media have tremendous power in this place, as do non-parliamentary groups.

This challenges Parliament's role, and that's not a reflection on either opposition party or on the government. I think we have to ask ourselves: is Parliament as effective a body as it could be? I think you could say yes and no. There are not enough free votes. I think we can look at both sides of the House. How often is there a member of the government who votes against his or her own party? You could look just as equally at the two opposition parties and ask how often one of their members stands up and votes on a controversial issue against their party leadership. I don't think you'd find a substantial difference. You might even find a number of instances where people have stood up on principled grounds, like the member for Stoney Creek. But I don't think that's a comment on the opposition or the government; it's a reality of how our parliamentary system has evolved, not just here in Canada but specifically in the province of Ontario.

I think there is a fundamental challenge, when you have the legislative body and the executive branch together, when you have them co-located. I think we have seen the growing instance of politics turning into a "gotcha" politics. I once saw one of the reporters here at Queen's Park do the intro to his story, and he made a few mistakes. In fact, he stood there and I think taped it eight or nine times until he got it just right, exactly right,

exactly what he wanted to communicate to his viewers. Mr Speaker, you don't have that chance, I don't have that chance, no member of this House has that chance. But if one member on one occasion makes one bad judgment: gotcha. Those of us on this side of the House will scream, "Gotcha!" and those in the opposition will scream, "Gotcha!" I don't think that's good for the process. It's a game that all of us, if we're honest, would admit that we've fallen into, and I think that's too bad.

Too often, people are more concerned with the politics than they are with the legislative issue in front of them or of sound public policy. I think of the issue of time allocation, where we now have to time-allocate bills in this place where all three parties agree. When all three parties support a minor bill, we have to go through the full legislative debate and process because, come hell or high water, one member or one party will want to slow the whole place down. When we have a consequential bill that's meaningful to all members, we'll sit here and have to debate it for just three or four days, but if there is an inconsequential bill where everyone agrees, it has to be debated for the same amount of time. We can't debate one bill longer than the other. I don't know whether that's the fault of the third party or the government, or perhaps both of us and the official opposition. But that's what Parliament has come to. I think that's a sad statement about all of us.

There is this dial-up indignation where people can simply press a button and explode with outrage. We heard the leader of the third party speak earlier about the lack of respect for Parliament on the side of the government. He was the Attorney General and a front-bench member in a government where the House only sat for 15 days in the course of an entire year. Where was the indignation there? Fifteen days in a single year, but no indignation. I certainly think that's the pot calling the kettle black.

I think we have to reflect on how this place has changed and look at what we can all do as individual members. I had the opportunity to appoint a new chair of the Ontario Energy Board. I went out and recruited someone of the highest calibre, someone of the highest integrity, someone who has a huge amount of experience as an advocate for consumers at the federal level, someone who served as a federal court judge, someone who served as a reform agent at the Ontario Securities Commission, someone whose past was absolutely impeccable as a public servant. We went to the legislative committee and, to their credit, Mr Bryant and Mr Conway supported it, but the NDP said no, despite this man's unquestioned ability for the job, despite his unquestioned character. It's the game; they'll just vote against it. I don't think that serves this place well.

Routinely, members in this House—opposition members—will ask questions of the government on behalf of their constituents and then scream and yell hysterically while the answer's being given. Why did they come? Why did they ask the question if they don't even do the courtesy of listening? I'm not going to be dishonest; I'm

sure it was the case when the other two parties opposite were in government, from members of my party. Again, it's dial-up indignation. That brings the whole place down. I think we've all got to acknowledge that.

I've been listening with great interest to Mr McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition, talk about the democratic deficit in Ontario, how there's got to be more democracy, how there's got to be more of an opportunity to expand the right of all citizens and legislators to participate. But what did they do in my friend the member for Ottawa-Vanier's riding? An individual stepped forward to run for the nomination, spent one year campaigning. This was someone with degrees from Harvard and Oxford, an outstanding public servant. What did they decide? They weren't going to have it. They cancelled the nomination meeting. Like any Third World dictatorship, "The vote is off; I will impose which candidate will be here." But again that same individual comes into this House and seeks to lecture those of us on this side of the House about a democratic deficit. It's absolutely disgraceful.

The member opposite dials up his indignation because he doesn't want to listen. He thinks that's acceptable. Cancel the nomination meeting and impose one man's iron will on the riding association members in Ottawa-Vanier. The candidate that's appointed couldn't get the nomination meeting.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** You should heckle. You should be embarrassed. An outstanding individual who wanted to represent his community was sloughed aside when they cancelled the vote. I'll tell you, Ernie Eves or Mike Harris or Larry Grossman or Andy Brandt or Bill Davis would have none of that.

I notice there are a lot of uncomfortable members over there. Who's it going to be next? We saw that in the riding of Scarborough Centre with my colleague Marilyn Mushinski. I don't have anything against Brad Duguid, but they cancelled that. It was absolutely wrong. We have confidence in the ballot box, not in the pen to slough aside democracy, to cancel votes. I think it's regrettable.

1430

I say there is a lot of blame to go around for the way this place has changed, but you've got to ask yourself, is the leader of that indignation without doubt?

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** Oh, they're going to win the seat, one of the members says. So it doesn't matter. "We can end democracy because we're going to win the seat." Not a single ballot has been cast and yet that party says, "We're going to win the seat." That's shameful; that is absolutely shameful. They should never take for granted the votes of people in this province.

You should hear what the Ottawa-Vanier Liberal association is saying about your party. You should hear what they're saying in Scarborough Centre.

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** What are they saying?

**Hon Mr Baird:** "The dictatorship of Dalton." It's shameful.



There is, among all members of this House, a common respect that we all have as we enter the front door. It's that we all had to seek election; we all had to stand for nomination of our party. I may disagree with the member for Windsor-St Clair, I may disagree with the member for Nickel Belt, but I know they had to get in here the same way. They didn't get appointed; they didn't get the seat by acclamation; they had to stand for nomination and had to stand for election, and there is a fundamental respect that we all have.

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** Call an election.

**Hon Mr Baird:** "Call an election." I'd like you to call an election in Ottawa-Vanier. I'd like to you call an election in Scarborough Centre. Let the people decide. But no, there won't be a nomination meeting in Ottawa-Vanier. There won't be a nomination meeting in Scarborough Centre because the vote was cancelled and a candidate was appointed. I think that is disgraceful.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** One vote. There was one vote.

**Hon Mr Baird:** One vote—Dalton McGuinty. We've gone from first among equals to first and only.

I'm not suggesting for a moment that there is not a lot of blame to go around on all sides of this House for the changes that have taken place in this Parliament over the last 25 years. But I do question the rightful indignation of some members of this House.

**Interjection:** Shame and indignation.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The "shame and indignation," one of my colleagues says.

Too often members of this House on all sides don't work together, but sometimes they do. I can say as minister of francophone affairs that I've had an excellent relationship with the member for Ottawa-Vanier. If she has a problem, she comes to speak to me, as does the member for Timmins-James Bay, as does the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. If there's a problem, they want to solve it, and I think that's rare. You don't see that enough on all sides—when we're in government, when the Liberals are the government or the New Democrats are government. I think that's a pity and I think that's a shame.

I think of the years when I was social services minister. Members, like the member for Nickel Belt or the member from Wilson Heights, would come to you with a problem to want to solve it. But too often other members will just choose the political route. They only care about getting the media headline that they're out there fighting for something, and I think that's regrettable. So I guess in this House you do see the best and the worst, and that's too bad.

The members opposite were talking about recent special warrants. The member from Renfrew, whom I have a tremendous respect for, got up yesterday and, I don't think it's unfair to say, deliberately wanted to leave the impression—just on the size, because he was clear in

pointing that out—but that special warrants were somehow never used. He absolutely wanted to—

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** It's the amount of the special warrant.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I realize it was the amount. I said he recognized it was the amount, but he clearly wanted to leave the impression of just the use of it, that it was secret. Of course something in cabinet is secret. But he deliberately wanted to leave the impression that this was somehow extraordinary and had never been used before.

So I said to my friend Stockwell, "Stockwell, how could this be the case?" My friend Stockwell came back to me: the warrant that was brought forward in 2003-04 was, indeed, for the largest amount, \$36 billion. As a percentage of the estimates, it's 50%. So I said to Stockwell, "Stockwell, is that the highest ever in Ontario's history?" Stockwell didn't know. He probably had to ask Pete Hardie. Back in 1995-96, because the House had only sat for 15 days of the previous 365 days, 60% of the budget was signed by special warrants—60%. Again, where's the indignation for that? Did one member of the cabinet say, "No, I'm sorry, the House hasn't come back in a year, so I'm going to step aside"? Not one.

People said that these were sometimes done for one or two years in a row, but special warrants had never been done three years standing in a row, except for three years: the three years from 1985 to 1988. Three years in a row, special warrants were brought in by the Liberal government—three years in a row. Did Richard Patten say, "That's wrong"?

**Mr Gerretsen:** How much?

**Hon Mr Baird:** How much? It was 29%, 20%, 25%—we're talking \$9 billion. That's chicken feed for you, I suppose—\$9 billion. Three years in a row. I suspect that's the first time in Commonwealth history that special warrants had been issued three years in a row. Alas, where's the indignation?

Don't talk about that, though. It's all our fault; it's all the Conservatives' fault. The Liberals and the NDP are clean. They've never, ever done anything to contribute to that. They're pure as the driven snow. No wonder they want an election. They thought that there should have been an election two years and 10 months after the election.

I can see some of the Liberals members leaving. They're in shame. That member, I know, served as a member of the Peterson Liberals.

**Hon Mr Clark:** With their heads down.

**Hon Mr Baird:** With their heads down.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Three years in a row—never in the Commonwealth.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Never in the Commonwealth, the former Speaker says.

My point is this: this institution is only as relevant and as meaningful as members on all sides of the House want to make it. I think we can all share a degree of responsibility for the changes that have gone on in this place and can work to try to make it more relevant. That's certainly something that I'm committing to do.

I did appreciate the time that we had to consult on the throne speech. It was an excellent opportunity for members to get out in their constituencies and talk to people. I had the opportunity to meet with members of the Ottawa-Carleton Life Skills board—they're a board which helps people with developmental disabilities in my riding—to get their thoughts on the direction. I appreciated the chance to meet, on a number of occasions, with Dr Jack Kitts and Gino Pucciano of the Ottawa Hospital—a real turnaround success story. It was the second-biggest public sector deficit in the entire province of Ontario. Now they've got a balanced budget, more hope and a big expansion underway. If you talk to any nurse or any worker in that hospital, they'll say the hospital is in solid shape.

I had the chance to talk to people from the Queensway-Carleton Hospital and talk about the new MRI, the expansion going on and the huge, gigantic \$30-million budget increase that they've had in recent years; to go to the Montfort Hospital and see the new long-term-care beds open; to look at the success at the Osgoode Care Centre, where they've raised money.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** Grace Manor is a lovely place. It's a new long-term-care centre. It's a good opportunity.

If you look at home care in Ottawa-Carleton, I had the chance to work with Graham Bird and others. Hospitals in Ottawa are better today than they've been in years. There are more long-term-care beds, no lineups at the community care access centre for medical services. We see a growth going on at all of the hospitals. We're finally able to expand the Queensway-Carleton Hospital. It was cancelled back in 1989, a year when they didn't bring in any special warrants.

I appreciated the opportunity that we all had to work hard in our constituencies, to listen, to bring those priorities back and have them reflected in the provincial budget and in the speech from the throne.

1440

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to bring to the attention of the House, in the west gallery, the co-op students from my riding: Ashley, Kamila, Jill, Elizabeth and Holly, who are in my constituency office and at the Brantford Expositor learning about democracy. I'm glad they're here, and I'd like us to welcome them.

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** I am pleased to join the debate and to remind the public of what we're debating. On May 8, Mr Speaker, you said, "From where I stand, the 2003 budget process has raised too many questions for the House not to reflect on them. In order to facilitate that exercise, I am finding that a prima facie case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do." That is what we are debating.

I want to say that I found your comments well developed. Particularly, I found the three paragraphs before your ruling important to the public. I honestly think that

if all members in this Legislature reflect on your decision, you made the right decision. I honestly believe we need to step back and calmly look at what you are trying to do on our behalf, Mr Speaker.

You said, "I have a lingering unease about the road we are going down, and my sense is that the House and the general public have the same unease. Let me summarize it by posing the following questions:

"First, what does the planned presentation of a budget speech outside the House suggest about the relevancy and primacy of Parliament? It is one thing not to make the traditional budget speech in the House because the government is backed into such a decision by an ongoing House process, or a budget leak; it is quite another for the government to have a deliberate plan not to do so."

I honestly believe—and I think members do—that there is no more important document than our budget. It's the basis on which the Legislature says to the public, "Here's how much of your money we are going to spend, and here's how we're going to get it." Surely none of us here cannot agree that the budget document is an extremely important document, and if it does not have to be presented here, what document does?

Your second point: "... if left unchallenged, will this incident not embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes for other kinds of events that traditionally occur in the House?" I've seen a creeping diminution of the role of Parliament since I've been here, since 1987. It took what I regard as an egregious breach, one that no one could ignore and one that, in my opinion, Mr Speaker, allowed you to say for all of us, "No more; we cannot go any further."

Finally, you said: "Third, why is an extraordinary parliamentary process needed if there is already a process in the House?" I really think that the public understands this issue, in many respects far better than perhaps we do here when we get into a partisan environment, where if that side says one thing we'll take the other side. It was up to you, Mr Speaker, and I know how difficult it was—we're all members of political parties; our Speakers are chosen from among us. It is important, when that decision is made, that the Speaker step aside and try his or her best to provide balanced impartiality.

Mr Speaker, I think if we all were to be objective, you've done an admirable job, and your ruling, objectively—forget the partisanship—was the right ruling and was a well-reasoned ruling. I suppose one might expect I might say that, because I agree with the ruling. I do know how difficult and challenging it must have been for you because of your deep roots with good friends in the Conservative Party, but you stepped aside from that.

What I want to say to the public is this is not an insignificant, minor debate that's going on. It's a debate about the role of Parliament. It's not an exaggeration to say that wars have been fought and lives have been lost over this issue, about what role the public should expect from democratically elected Parliaments. I once again compliment my colleague Mr Conway, who I thought put it in well-researched language to remind us of how we



arrived at a parliamentary democracy and the importance of it.

Just on the face of it, Mr Speaker, if we all step back, your ruling that there was a *prima facie* case of contempt of the House is, in my opinion, exactly right and does require us to stand back and reflect on it and take the appropriate decision.

My colleague Mr Conway moved what I regarded as a very balanced motion. He simply said, and I'll quote it just so the public is aware: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

I actually believed the government would say, "You know, we made the decision to present the budget outside the Legislature because we thought it was appropriate; we decided to do it. But we understand the Speaker's ruling, and we accept that ruling." I really thought that's what they would do. In my opinion, that would have put this matter behind us, to a very large extent. But the government has chosen, for whatever reason, to say they're not going to accept that.

Therefore, I go back to your reasoning, Mr Speaker. If the government is saying, "No, I'm not going to accept Mr Conway's motion," what they're essentially saying is, "And furthermore, we'll keep doing these sorts of things." Therefore, the contempt ruling will essentially be null and void because the government says, "We have decided we are not going to accept the contempt ruling." So I say to the public, where does it end?

You laid out your concerns, which I think the public would agree with: "What does the planned presentation of a budget speech outside the House suggest about the relevancy and primacy of Parliament?" If the government is saying they'll continue to do it, it says a lot about their interpretation of it. If left unchallenged, what next? Indeed, what next? If the budget is not something that should be presented here first and that we have it, where are the boundaries? Your final point, Mr Speaker, is that if this was the right process, why in the world did we not have a process in place here for dealing with it?

In many respects, my larger concern is as a result of the government's decision that they are going to defeat Mr Conway's motion. I say to all of us, where does it lead in terms of the role of Parliament? This process has been long developed. The public has had confidence that there was a system of checks and balances in place, where a process was being followed and a parliamentary democracy was dealing with it. The government has chosen not to follow that and, worse still, to say, "Not only did we not follow it, but we're making a conscious decision that we'll do whatever we want in the future as well."

1450

Mr Speaker, I've read your finding several times. It was well done. The final few paragraphs caught the essence of it for me. I think the public must be wondering what the government's thinking is here. Are they not even remotely sorry for what they did? The Liberals and

NDP are offended, but that may not matter to the government. Did the government not see that the public is offended by this? Does the government not recognize the will of the public? Believe me, the will of the public is, "Don't do it. Admit you made a mistake and don't do it." That is essentially Mr Conway's motion. But the government has said, "No. Frankly, we didn't make a mistake." Maybe it's difficult for them to say, "We made a mistake." I think the public in many respects has been hit twice. When I heard that the budget was going to be at Magna, I thought somebody had pulled a joke on the media. I thought, if they're not presenting it here in the Legislature, what would be the worst thing they could do? And they did that: they made that huge mistake of not presenting it here. But now we find that they're simply going to ignore your finding, Speaker, to which I think, had they accepted the motion, the public would have said, "All right, they've learned their lesson and let's move on."

My colleague Mr Conway raised in the Legislature yesterday a further step of my opinion of contempt, with the special warrants. The public should recognize that December 12 was the last time the Legislature met until we came back here in May. I find that in many respects contemptuous. I live in Scarborough-Agincourt, an area dramatically affected by the SARS outbreak. I would have appreciated the Legislature being in session so the public could see us grabbing control of it and dealing with it in a public way. But from December 12 to May we didn't even meet. That was the government's decision.

I remember, right after the 1995 election, when Mr Eves appointed the Ontario Financial Review Commission, this is what he said: "In July our government established the Ontario Financial Review Commission. I asked them to look at ways to restore confidence and credibility to the province's financial reporting and planning practices." He went on to say, "In taking these steps ... I want Ontarians to have confidence that their government's financial planning is open, realistic and credible." He was responding to concerns about the way the finances were being reported, so he appointed this commission, and one of the things he said was, "We are going to present the budget to the Legislature before the fiscal year starts." I took him at his word in 1995 that he was serious about bringing what he called in this document, "I want Ontarians to have confidence that their government's financial planning is open, realistic and credible."

This commission was appointed in July 1995, literally days after the election, because they wanted the public to feel that the process was going to be open, transparent and credible. But what have we found? First, a budget that was not even presented here in the Legislature, and, as you have found, Speaker, a *prima facie* case of contempt; and the Legislature not meeting from December 12 until May 1. The public is incredulous when they find out that during all these challenges we were faced with we didn't even meet. And then they're aware that Mr

Eves, when he became finance minister, was going to improve the openness and credibility of the process. Then we found yesterday, because of Mr Conway's awareness, that there was something called a special warrant, where the government went for—I think it was \$32 billion—

**Mr Gerretsen:** Thirty-six billion.

**Mr Phillips:** That's right, \$36.2 billion, secretly, behind closed doors. Frankly, there was virtually—well, not virtually—no public notice of it. My colleague was aware of it because someone informed him of it. So here we are now, as the public is making an assessment of the government and the Premier on how they treat the people we are here to serve. All of us, I hope, try to remind ourselves on a daily basis that we're here to serve the public, but firstly the Speaker, with a well-reasoned finding, says to the government, "Listen, you've made a mistake. You are in contempt of the Legislature and I, the Speaker, now look to the Legislature to find a redress to this."

There's a solution put forward that any fair-minded person would say—I thought—is a reasoned motion: henceforth, the budget would be presented first here in the Legislature. I've listened carefully and I do not understand the logic of the government saying they're not going to agree to that. To me, that is particularly contemptuous.

Part of the background of all of this was the Legislature was due to sit in mid-March and the budget could have been presented, should have been presented, right there. There was no need for the government to go for these special warrants. Nothing, nothing, nothing other than the personal and political agendas of the government prevented us from meeting. Was there any single reason why we could not have met in March? None. Other than the political and personal agendas of the government, there was no event that required delay. There was no reason why we should have been delayed.

Part of my opinion that the government was treating the public with contempt was, "We simply won't meet. We've decided we won't meet, even though we agreed when we left in December we would meet in March," even though, frankly, if you reflect back to mid-March, there were major issues facing the people of Ontario—major issues—that we should have been here dealing with. But there was not a single reason other than political. This was all about the election. That's why we didn't meet. It was all about the election, so that the Premier would not be subject to one of the treasured parliamentary traditions, and that is question period, where the opposition, on behalf of the public, get to ask the government to defend and to answer legitimate public business.

We see a series of what I regard as contemptuous moves. I see no reason, other than political, why we did not meet in March. Frankly, it's embarrassing and the public should be aware of it. On December 12, we left this place and we did not come back until May. There's no reason why, other than political. We found yesterday, because of Mr Conway's work, that over \$36 billion of

money was appropriated; in other words, the government got authority to spend \$36 billion of taxpayers' money without even coming before the Legislature for that; all done behind closed doors. Some members may say, "Well, warrants have been done before." But why in the world—they're done when there is no other recourse. But the government, once again, created this. All we had to do was come back in March for our normal session.

**1500**

Mr Speaker, it's with sincerity that I say I know how difficult it was for you to do this. You did the Legislature a service. It is a finding that, I think, will be quite historic. My regret is that the government could have dealt with this in a statesman-like way and put this matter behind us by simply agreeing to the motion that henceforth budgets will be presented first here in the Legislature. I cannot, for the life of me, understand why the government doesn't agree to that.

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** I listened carefully to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, for whom I have a great deal of respect in his thought process. He is a bulldog when he thinks he is right, and you can't criticize someone for being that. He is also an individual who will truly apologize when he is convinced that he was incorrect or didn't have all the facts. I'm not asking that the member do that at this point. He's right that comments in this Legislature are often made in a purely, clearly partisan nature. His thought is that any fair-minded person should support this particular motion.

I will say that I feel that I am probably a reasonably fair-minded person. I grew up in a small town in northern Ontario, in Sault Ste Marie. My father was a lifelong railroad worker, a member of the union.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Spina:** It was Steel City, Sault Ste Marie. I often listen—

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** Hey, hey.

**Mr Spina:** Well, the other Steel City, yes, I say to the member from Hamilton, with respect. Hamilton carries the crown.

We learned and we grew up with a very grassroots appreciation for life. We all tried to get the best education we could. We tried to raise our families, just as everyone does, in a good, compassionate manner, and make a contribution to our community and to our society. And then some of us got elected.

But I will say that even though I consider myself a fair-minded person, as the member indicated, I will not be supporting this motion. I fundamentally disagree with the motion, for many reasons. I'm not going to get into that.

What I am going to talk about is the comment that the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, and others, have made regarding these special warrants. The minister earlier spoke about special warrants—and they admitted that this wasn't a precedent.

**Mr Gerretsen:** He did it in secret.



**Mr Spina:** There is nothing secret about special warrants. A warrant in fact is put forward—and its effective time—by the secretary to cabinet. The civil service then bases the amount on the amount of money that they feel they need to meet the business needs of operating government. So it's not a political decision. When you're going into an election year, it is necessary for the public service to be able to pay the wages and to pay the normal, everyday bills of government. These are our nursing homes, our transfer payments to hospitals, our payments to the doctors across this province who bill OHIP, the funding programs that are put forward to the municipalities in this province, the Ontario Works recipients, our welfare recipients, our social service agencies, children's aid societies. All of these people could not have been paid without a special warrant. So why was a special warrant requested? As a normal course of doing business. You're facing an election year and when the public service isn't certain when that specific election will be called, it's a matter of course to request a special warrant.

The strange thing is how special warrants are requested and put forward in a non-election year. The minister spoke earlier about three consecutive years of Liberal government, and some of those former cabinet ministers are sitting here today and don't want to talk about it. But they put forward these amounts: \$23 billion, when the average budget for three years was \$31 billion. That's 74%, for Pete's sake. That's unbelievable when you look at—

**Mr Gerretsen:** It is?

**Mr Spina:** And that's what the Liberal government did from 1985 to 1987.

**Mr Gerretsen:** That wasn't right, either.

**Mr Spina:** The information is available from Management Board. Take it out of Management Board. These are not concocted numbers; they come right out of Management Board. I say to the member from Kingston and the Islands, you sit on the estimates committee—or you did.

**Mr Gerretsen:** No.

**Mr Spina:** Well, you're close to it. I know, sir, that you are close, as the member from Scarborough-Agincourt is, to the financials of this government, and you're the critic for how this government spends money. I tell you, look in your own backyard. You have a lot of stones there. You have a lot of stones.

I say to the Liberal Party that I am stunned at their accusation of the undemocratic way that this government has been said to be operating. I bring not only the example of Ottawa that the minister indicated a few moments ago, but let's look at Brampton Centre. Let's look at Brampton Centre, my riding. There are many long-term, long-time responsible community people in Brampton who have been Liberals and would have been willing to run for the Liberal nomination, but what did the party president do? He didn't want any of those people. He wanted to choose the person that his leader could appoint—destroy democracy. Guys like Billy Bengal and Gus Grewal would have been good candidates for the Liberal Party to run against me. I'm not afraid to name names, like the member from Middlesex.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Name names.

**Mr Spina:** OK, Linda Jeffrey is a nice person; she is. She has been a friend. And do you know what? I will take most pleasure when the election is over to call you, Mr Sorbara, and gloat when that happens. But I will say that Linda Jeffrey is a candidate I have a great deal of respect for, and we will have no problem running an election campaign against each other. The people around her, I question. When some of the people around her campaign team disgracefully send out fundraising letters on city of Brampton letterhead—it is totally unacceptable to use city of Brampton letterhead for a partisan Liberal fundraising event. And Linda Jeffrey's people did do it.

**Interjection:** Isn't that illegal?

**Mr Spina:** I've been told that it was illegal. The CAO of the city of Brampton is looking into it. In fact, even Elections Ontario is examining this issue. It is absolutely improper, and even worse, when the signature on the letter is the chair of the planning committee of the city and the letter went to all the developers. My God, I've never seen such a state of coercion from the Liberal Party. It's totally unbelievable that this kind of coercion would take place in the role of provincial politics.

**1510**

Brampton is booming. We are doing well. We have business. We have \$2 million to Brampton Transit to buy 200 new buses, virtually doubling our fleet. We have increased the Peel District Board of Education budget by over \$188 million since 1997. That's a 22% increase that equals over \$857 million. The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board budget has also increased by \$169 million since 1997, a 28% increase to total \$603 million. The improved, new school capital funding formula that began in 1997 helped to build or renovate more than 37 schools in Brampton. That, gentlemen and ladies, is the most construction that has taken place in the history of Brampton with regard to the construction of schools. This government is committed to education.

This government is also committed to health care. We are welcoming a new hospital that will be built using a P3 model which equals 100% universal public health care at its best. I say to my NDP candidate Kathy Pounder, "God bless her." She's a good candidate. She speaks for the health care coalition. And do you know what? I welcome her as a candidate because she at least is consistent. It's going to be very interesting to watch the Liberal candidate caught in the crosshairs when she believes in the hospital construction going ahead but her party leader says he'll roll back the P3 partnership. Won't that be an interesting debate, Mr Sorbara? You'd better prepare that little girl for that debate, let me tell you. But I'm very happy—

**Interjections.**

**Mr Spina:** She is a good friend. She is a bright woman and she is a good candidate.

**Interjection.**

**The Speaker:** Member, take your seat. Order. I'd ask all members to please remember that we do have some young people in the galleries here today who are watching. I apologize to the member from Brampton Centre.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** On a point of order, Speaker: The member for Brampton made a reference to an adult woman as "that little girl." I believe that is offensive and I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** I'm afraid I was speaking with one of the other members during that and did not hear it, but I know all members, if they say something, they can regret it. We were chatting with one of the House leaders on another issue and I apologize; I didn't hear it. But if any member does say it, I'm sure they will apologize. Sorry for the interruption again. The member for Brampton Centre.

**Mr Spina:** I withdraw, Speaker. That was not a fair comment. Thank you, member. She is a bright, intelligent woman. The member representing the NDP will be consistent. She is a good candidate. Kathy Pounder is a good candidate and I look forward to her presentation.

On Saturday, when I opened my campaign office and we had a celebration, I was very pleased to welcome Kathy and the NDP candidates. The health care coalition came with their placards, visited our office. We welcomed them. We shared soft drinks with the kids and said that there would be room for debate when it comes to the election. We look forward to that opportunity.

There is a concern in Brampton that even with the development of our new hospital, the 608-bed, largest non-teaching community hospital in this province, we will be redeveloping the current Brampton Memorial Hospital site to include 112 complex continuing care beds, a modern emergency and ambulatory care centre, an eye institute and an outpatient surgery and rehabilitation centre.

As far as public safety is concerned, I was pleased to speak personally with Chief Catney as early as today. We've provided \$14 million to the Peel Regional Police Service to hire 124 new front-line police officers so that Brampton may continue to be a safe and secure place for families to grow.

Brampton is booming thanks to this government, thanks to the economy that this government has brought. We've increased total new employment over this recent period 26%; total new business in the past year, 35%; the unemployment rate dropped by 1.4%; average active UIC claims dropped by 26.5%. If you want a job, folks, come to Brampton. We've got work for you. Our construction value has gone up by 72%; residential, 185%; commercial, 326%. Our housing resale activity has dropped 12% but the average house price has gone up 9% and housing permits and units have gone up by 135%.

**Mr Gerretsen:** So your point is?

**Mr Spina:** Our point is, sir, that this city is succeeding, and is succeeding well. The economy is moving forward because of this government's positive economic activities and initiatives. We will continue to do so over the next mandate of this government. We've invested in health and seniors' care; we are building over 1,100 new long-term-care beds in Brampton; we've increased health care spending—provincially, of course—by \$8 billion to

\$25 billion this year, as is declared in the estimates; and we've invested, in Peel alone, \$9.5 million for the Carlo Fidani Peel Regional Cancer Centre in Mississauga, which will serve all of Peel, and we're very pleased. Because of that we will not be having to transport our patients from Brampton to Toronto as we currently do.

With respect to transit, it's always a problem, particularly if you're in the GTA. We've increased GO Transit service throughout the day, something for which we had been lobbying for 15 years, from when I was president of the Brampton Board of Trade, to try to increase GO Transit service on the northwest corridor. Why? Because we had people who had more flexibility in their hours than GO Transit was able to provide. We also needed to provide the opportunity for GO Transit people to come from Toronto out to the suburbs, where the jobs were, and we needed a good two-way commute throughout the day. We're pleased that a few months ago we made that announcement. It is now a reality.

We have installed lights. We're expanding the highway system. We plan soon to make an announcement to complete Highway 410 right up into Caledon. It's amazing. When I got elected in 1995 we jokingly referred to it as Highway 205 because it was half of 410. I have no idea where the bureaucracy was in this government but, for whatever reason, they built half a highway and stopped it dead at Bovaird Drive. Now we will be able to complete it, finish Highway 410, and go all the way through into Caledon.

I'm very pleased to, as I said earlier, not support this motion, because I think it is wrongheaded. I think there are precedents in this government. Just because it is a precedent, doesn't make it law. I will say that I think the entire parliamentary process ought to be brought into the 21st century—and it barely is, kicking and dragging, but nevertheless, we must continue to do so.

I've been a resident of Brampton for 28 years, and I can tell you that I've enjoyed the time that I've lived there, and I will continue to enjoy it. We welcome today the children from St Joachim school who are visiting us. We're pleased. These children were very proud and happy to come to the Legislature and see where government works. Thank you for this opportunity.

1520

**Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora):** I'm pleased to speak, particularly after the remarks of my colleague on the other side of the aisle from Brampton Centre. I note, in passing, that on what I—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Could you reset the clock in a minute, please?

Before I get started, I just wanted to introduce, also in the east gallery, some of the students from Wallace Public School, close to the town of Listowel in the north end of the Perth-Middlesex riding. The only reason I wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to do that was that they were also recognized last night at the SkyDome for their participation and attendance at the ball game. If you wouldn't mind welcoming all the visitors today, also in the west gallery as well as the east gallery.



The apologies to the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora. You'll now have your full 20 minutes.

**Mr Sorbara:** We all welcome the kids and hope they're enjoying the debates in this Legislature.

As I was saying before your introductions, sir, I was pleased to speak after the member from Brampton Centre, but I have to note, in passing, that—and I listened very carefully to his remarks—I don't think he addressed but 30 seconds to the motion that's before us today.

The reason why I'm here and speaking today is because I truly believe that the motion put in front of this House by my colleague Mr Conway, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, is perhaps, in a strange, parliamentary kind of way, one of the most important motions that this Legislature has ever considered. I say that because—and the thesis of my remarks will be quite simple—the *prima facie* contempt that you found in your ruling was a historic opportunity for this Parliament, and for this province and its political system, to start now, perhaps, to get its act together and to stop the outflow of respect that has been infiltrating and poisoning our political system for a very long time now.

We've heard, I think, some great remarks during the course of this debate. I want to particularly refer to the remarks of my colleague Mrs McLeod, the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan. In her remarks of yesterday, she said, "This government was in contempt of this Legislature because of what the Premier said. It was contempt to the people of Ontario because he said they don't care. He was in contempt of this place and of members because he said that ... to take the budget speech outside the Legislature because they wanted to communicate with the people. This is not a government that communicates; this is a government that advertises."

The point that Mrs McLeod was making is that there is a course of conduct of contempt by the Progressive Conservative government that has culminated in this Parliament stopping all its other business to consider an unusual and historic ruling by the Speaker, finding that the government, in its failure to live up to its obligations to account for its business, is in contempt of Parliament.

Maybe we should get rid of a whole bunch of the words surrounding this debate and tell the story pretty plainly and pretty simply. What does this contempt mean? What it means to me is that the government has bunkered itself behind a wall of advertising and spinning and management and manipulation of the public agenda that, if it continues, will bring the practice of politics in Ontario into huge disrespect.

I want to tell my friends on the other side of this Legislature that not only have you lost the respect of this Parliament; you are very quickly losing the respect of the people of this province, because you have taken the practice of governing and the practice of parliamentary democracy and transformed it into a system of manipulation and spinning and distorting and misrepresenting such that we've reached a point where all other business stops to consider your behaviour.

Frankly, during the course of this debate, I found it appalling that the members on the other side of the

House, the government members of this House, haven't yet been able to see the light.

The motion before us is quite simple. It reads: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario." That's pretty simple. The resolution here is that we're not going to do budgets at Magna any more; when it's time to present a budget, that budget will be presented before the elected representatives in this Parliament.

Yet I've listened to speaker after speaker on the government side—Progressive Conservative members—talking about anything but this resolution. My friend from Brampton Centre just spent 20 minutes talking about the great things that are happening in the city of Brampton—agreed. What does that have to do with the threat to our system of democracy that exists right now?

I don't want to pretend that we need to support and pass this resolution to protect cherished traditions. I'm not all that hot on cherished traditions. I think what this motion and this event and this contempt and this disrespect indicates is an opportunity to start down a new and better path, to start to look at ourselves and the way we have distorted politics in Ontario and set a new and better course.

At this point in the parliamentary calendar, we are supposed to be dissolving this Parliament and having an election. A year ago, the acting Premier, Ernie Eves, promised that if elected he would govern for eight, nine or 10 months and that we would have an election this spring. I hope he has the courage to actually call that election, but there is some doubt.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Sorbara:** Well, well, they've finally woken up over there. We've finally got their attention.

1530

**The Deputy Speaker:** Only one person has the floor. It happens to be the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, and you'll give him your attention if you're here. The Chair recognizes the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora.

**Mr Sorbara:** I appreciate that, Mr Speaker.

Whether or not there is an election this spring is up to one person: the acting Premier of Ontario.

**Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** And the people of the province.

**Mr Sorbara:** No, my friend, not the people of Ontario. Right now, it's only the Premier who decides that question.

Talking about disrespect and the way in which our system has fallen into disrepair, in anticipation of the possibility of an election, we have found, in my view, some of the most scandalous manipulation and spinning that any government has ever indulged in in the history of this province. Every single Ontarian has been badgered, lobbied, polled by advertisements on television, radio, in magazines like *Maclean's*, in inserts that come in the mail—taxpayers' money in the millions and millions of dollars to try to use your money, sir, my money, and the money of 12 million Ontarians to try and convince the people that the government has done a great job. The

great news for me is that the more those leaflets come in the mail—and they're all the same, more or less. They've all been written by the same ad agency; they all have the same blue Tory colours; they all have the little inserts where you send them back to the government and say, "Yeah, you know what? These are my concerns." That's a nice way of doing a poll at the taxpayers' expense. You send in your name, your address, and your e-mail, and you probably get a nice letter printed by the same advertising agency saying, "Thank you," etc. etc. This is in the millions and millions of dollars. This is an abuse that we have to put an end to. This is yet another example of the government losing respect, holding the people in contempt.

There is a time to tell your story to the people, and that's during an election campaign. There are ways of paying for that, and that's by the money that is donated to political parties. That's the appropriate way of doing it.

But this theme of contempt and disrespect: I tell my friends on the other side, when the history of your time in office is reviewed by unbiased, objective historians, the theme of disrespect and contempt for the voters will touch everything and be a theme in everything that you've done.

In the public education system: contempt and disrespect for teachers, for the quality of our system. Where does the action go? Where does the good stuff go? The good stuff goes to the private schools. We don't have enough money to fix our public education system, but we have \$500 million to support the private education system.

Contempt and disrespect for our health care system: six years ago, this government summarily, with its spending power, sent 15,000 nurses packing. They spread all over North America. They left Ontario; some of them left the profession. Contempt and disrespect for professionals in the health care system.

On the environment: contempt and disrespect for the high standards that Ontario used to maintain in making sure that we could drink the water from our water systems in the province. Do you remember the early days of Walkerton? The Premier of this province stood up and just brushed off the problem. "It's no problem. It's a couple of guys that were screwing around with the system."

Contempt and disrespect in the public transit system: six years ago, the Premier of this province, the predecessor to Ernie Eves, said, "We have no time for public transit and we have no money. Cities and towns want to have public transit? They'll pay for it themselves"—contempt and disrespect for the needs of the general public.

In my own riding, a great toll highway was built. Actually, Highway 407 was started under a Liberal administration. At that time, Ed Fulton was the Minister of Transportation. Our government was succeeded by the NDP government. They decided to build it more rapidly.

**Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** Excuse me; the Conservatives started planning that.

**Mr Sorbara:** God, that voice just grates in this place.

The construction of the highway was started in 1987, while Ed Fulton was the Minister of Transportation. Our government was succeeded by the New Democratic party government. In 1990, Bob Rae decided that, to speed up construction, it would be a toll highway with fascinating new technology, an all-electronic toll system. It worked pretty well. In 1999, the government of the day, the government that was led by Mike Harris, the government in which Ernie Eves was the finance minister, sold that highway to private foreign interests at a pittance of its value. They promised the people of Ontario that under this contract, tolls would only go up by 2% above inflation, whatever that might be, for 15 years. In that regard they misrepresented the contract, and what they did there showed contempt and disrespect for the public of Ontario and, in this case, the driving public that uses that highway. Can you imagine a government negotiating a contract, selling a very valuable public asset, and not putting in that contract one word about consumer protection?

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** Why don't you read the contract?

**Mr Sorbara:** Contempt and disrespect, I tell my friend from Mississauga South, for her constituents and everyone else who uses that highway. I want to tell you that after the next election, should our party be successful, we will do everything we can to roll back those rates and put in reasonable rates that respect the interests of consumers in Ontario.

So it has gone over the course of eight years: an increasing degree of contempt and disrespect for the people. You see it more and more in government activities, this business of listening to the spin doctors say: "Don't worry. You don't need to go back to Parliament. I think we've got a great idea. I think we can do the budget in a place where we can control everything. We can control the audience; we can control the spin. There will be no opposition replies. There will be no debate for a long time, and we'll tell them, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, we'll present it all in Parliament as well when we come back after a throne speech.'" Contempt and disrespect for the systems that we have in place in Ontario to hold the government to account.

Now I say to you, sir, there's further contempt and disrespect in this very debate, where speaker after speaker from the government party, the Conservatives over there, refuse to stand up in this House and explain why they are not going to support this motion.

But I think there's a bright light in all of this, because when things get so bad—and recently a marvellous book called *Tipping Point* was written about this very idea, that stuff gets worse and worse and finally it gets so bad that we have the capacity and the energy suddenly to change the system. Our parliamentary system is in drastic need of repair. Our parliamentary system, particularly for the last eight years, isn't working well. Maybe we should thank the government for doing what they did, because finally we have the courage to stand here, and authors and reviewers and political columnists have the courage to say, "It's not working and it needs repair."



1540

I am thrilled that our party, in anticipation of the next election, whenever the Premier finds the courage to call it, will bring forward a package of democratic reforms that I believe can start us down a better road.

First among those is to take away from the Premier, whoever he or she is, the power to manipulate the timing of an election. A simple change in our constitution will provide fixed dates for elections so that after the next election, should we be successful, from there on in elections will be held on a date that everyone knows about from the moment the results of the last election are counted. Some people have said, "Oh, my God, what about responsible government, and what about the Parliament falling as a result of a vote of non-confidence?" All of that has been taken into consideration. We can do that. We're going to do that by way of allowing for an extraordinary election should a government be defeated on a vote of confidence in this House. That's just one provision.

We're going to transform the way business is done in here. We're going to make the lives of parliamentarians relevant again, whether in committee or in this Legislature. We are going to make what we do here relevant again and we are going to try to regain the respect that we believe we deserve as parliamentarians sitting in this great House. It's not going to be easy. The agenda will be difficult, and those of us who are returned here after the next election are going to be tempted to fall into old ways.

But I want to say that the ruling of Mr Speaker Carr, in finally saying out loud from that chair that the government has shown a *prima facie* case of contempt, may just be the best thing that has ever happened to this Parliament if we can change the way we do business and set ourselves a new course. That's the result I would like to see and that's why I am urging not only members on this side of the House but on that side to support this motion.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** I stand to speak to the amendment made by Mr Bisson to Mr Conway's motion. Further, I now move an amendment to Mr Bisson's amendment to Mr Conway's motion. I move that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding the following thereto: "and its members."

**Mrs Marland:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Maybe you can advise the House. This would then be the second amendment to the main motion?

**Mr Kormos:** No, an amendment to the amendment.

**Mrs Marland:** All right, an amendment to the amendment. It would be the third motion on the floor, correct? There is the main motion, Mr Conway's motion. You already have an amendment, I believe, and this would be a second amendment. That would be three motions on the floor. Mr Speaker, can you advise us whether that would be in order?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I just want to clarify that that is a legitimate question but it's not a point of order. There are other means you can go to to find out the answer to

that question. The answer to your question is that of course it is in order to have this amendment to the amendment to the motion. But to stand up on a point of order and ask a question is not a point of order.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** Are you going to reset Mr Kormos's time?

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is not question period, either.

Mr Kormos moves that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding the following thereto: "and its members."

From now on, that will be the central topic of debate.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr Kormos:** I appreciate Mrs Marland's interest in our amendment and her enthusiastic participation in my having moved it.

**Mr Caplan:** I tried to get your time back, Peter.

**Mr Kormos:** There were other members who tried to get my time back. Gosh, I remember a member, yesterday or the day before, who did get his time back and, notwithstanding that, responded in a somewhat objectionable way.

First, let's understand that this amendment to Mr Bisson's amendment is designed to make the motion in its broadest sense, as amended, perhaps more appealing to all members. The issue is contempt. The Speaker found contempt. Make no mistake about it. And make no mistake about it, Conservative members, that your defeat—

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think that in the decision rendered, the Speaker explicitly said he cannot find the government in contempt; it's up to the House to decide on that. That is the ruling of the Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes, that is what the Speaker ruled.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr Kormos:** I say to these Conservative members that they may somehow think they're going to reverse the Speaker's decision, the Speaker's finding of contempt, by defeating the motion put forward, as amended by—

**Mr Beaubien:** On a point of order, Speaker: The member from Welland-Thorold keeps insisting on saying that the Speaker ruled the government was in contempt. That is not the ruling of the Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You have a point of order, and you are absolutely correct. But this Speaker, the person occupying the Speaker's chair at this point, does not have the authority—you have not given us in this chair the authority—to make sure that what everybody says in this House is correct. So to continually get up and say the member is incorrect may be perfectly true, but it's improper for me to interrupt his proceeding all the time to remind him that that may be so.

**Mr Beaubien:** Speaker, on a point of correction: I called the member the member from Welland-Thorold; it's Niagara Centre. I would like to correct the record, please.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is a point of order. I will give the member for Niagara Centre an opportunity to correct himself.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr Kormos:** The Speaker's finding of contempt is not going to be overcome, is not going to be negated, is not going to be nullified, is not going to somehow be eradicated from the parliamentary record—

**Mr Beaubien:** On a point of order, Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre keeps insisting that the Speaker found the government in contempt. That is not the ruling of the Speaker. I would like that on the record.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That will be on the record. But let me be very clear: the member for Niagara Centre or any other member may get up in this House and say that black is white or, on the other hand, that white is black, and everybody may know that that is so. But it is not within the authority of the presiding officer to keep ruling that that is not so. It is up to you to indulge in proper debate and for people to take what they can and should from that debate.

I'm a little bit impatient. I would like the member for Niagara Centre to have the opportunity to continue debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion.

1550

**Mr Kormos:** There is nothing that the Conservative majority in this Legislature can do during the course of this debate or upon the vote on this amendment, or the amendment which it amends or on the motion as amended, hopefully, or unamended, to eradicate, to erase, to somehow reverse, to nullify or in any other way alter what was a clear finding by the Speaker, a finding that there was contempt by this government; contempt not only for this Parliament, I put to you, but contempt for the people of Ontario.

**Mr Beaubien:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The official report of Hansard dated May 8, 2003, on page 234, quoting the Speaker, states, "From where I stand, the 2003 budget process has raised too many questions for the House not to reflect on them. In order to facilitate that exercise, I am finding that a prima facie case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do." That is the ruling of the Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let me be very clear. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, you are correct, and I would encourage the member for Niagara Centre to use the terminology of it, but it's not my purview; it will only become mine if it's cause for grave concern and a lack of decorum in the House. I know that you know better, but it is causing a little bit of concern to not only the one member but to other members. I would encourage you to bring your language within the confines of good debate, but I give you your time in proper debate.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker, and I appreciate your observation that I in fact know better. I certainly know better than Mr Beaubien. Mr Beaubien somehow thinks that his caucus and their majority can alter history,

can change the ruling. The fact is that in Erskine and May, decades from now, if you look up "contempt" in the index, there's going to be a reference to Speaker Gary Carr and the Conservative government of Ontario, year 2003. Look up "contempt" in Beauchesne in the index, and there will be a page on which there's going to be a clear reference to Premier Eves, to the finding of the Speaker. The Speaker established a precedent that this House can't erase, not in any way. The only thing this government can do is purge its contempt. Rather than purge its contempt, what has it done? It has aggravated its contempt—one member with the now-notorious, nationally advertised, middle digit raised in contempt for this Parliament and the people of Ontario—a Conservative backbencher.

Another Conservative backbencher, reported in the press as voicing the most vulgar of obscenities—

**Mr Caplan:** Who?

**Mr Kormos:** One Mr Spina, I'm told in the newspapers, expressed the most vulgar of obscenities here in this House.

**Mr Sorbara:** Oh, you can be more vulgar in Italian.

**Mr Kormos:** It wasn't in English, but it happened to be a non-English word that even I know the translation of.

Then we have Mr Beaubien, who shows contempt—

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Go outside the House and say that, Peter.

**Mr Kormos:** Oh, inside the House, outside the House, you're all being contemptuous of this House. In fact, you're contemptible. I've said it outside the House, I've said it inside the House, I've said it on television, I've said it on radio, I've said to the newspapers. Don't be silly. Go hire your lawyer. Maybe it'll be the same lawyer who helped Mr O'Toole draft his peculiar speech the other day. Maybe you can hire the lawyer who was paid to write opinions for you, however brief they were.

**Mr Sorbara:** Vacuous.

**Mr Kormos:** Indeed, as Mr Sorbara indicates. Mr Sorbara is a lawyer as well as a developer and a politician. It can't get any worse, really, can it, Mr Sorbara?

**Mr Sorbara:** Now, I just got the dictionary for you.

**Mr Kormos:** You did. I'm just making an observation.

The contempt is not just by this government; the contempt is by every single member of this Legislature who stands up and defends this government, who tries to vilify the Speaker, who condemns the Speaker both inside and outside the House, who suggests that somehow the Speaker isn't impartial. That's contempt.

You see, this government had every opportunity, from day one. I was at the press conference. I was at the stand-up outside the Premier's office when the Premier, to the shock of everyone listening, announced that this government was going to ignore the House calendar, was going to ignore the adjournment date, and that this House was going to be prorogued. They didn't prorogue it back in December but waited until March to prorogue, just days before the House was scheduled to come back. Not only



did he say that, but then he announced that his bogus budget, his buy-a-Chia-Pet, just dial 1-800-NOW informational bogus budget was going to be up at Frank Stronach's Magna corp instead of here in the Legislature. From that very moment New Democrats, amongst others, pointed out that that budget would be illegal, that that budget would be contemptuous, that that budget would be a violation of parliamentary tradition—from the very minute the Premier made that speech outside his office. Fair warning, I say.

There are rumours—albeit rumours but not beyond belief—that the Ministry of the Attorney General prepared an opinion about the constitutionality of the Chia Pet budget at Magna corp, the Ginsu knife budget down at Frank Stronach's auto parts manufacturing centre. Again, the press reported the rumour. But is it that difficult to believe that the Attorney General would have been called upon in consultation? I say to you, no, that's one of the jobs of the Attorney General. That's why he's paid the big bucks. Oh, not the Attorney General. Look, the Attorneys General of this government have such a pathetic record in court and otherwise. They haven't won a case yet, have they?

**Mr Sorbara:** No.

**Mr Kormos:** And indeed have embarrassed themselves. Or maybe the Supreme Court of Canada appears, by one long gone—he's not long gone; he's simply not the Attorney General any more. I recall some rather unfortunate conduct by yet a prior Attorney General. See, the Attorneys General haven't had a good track record here. But is it beyond belief to think that an Attorney General would have been called upon by this government for an opinion? I'm not sure which Attorney General, which person. One suspects it's the current Attorney General.

But contempt? You guys are contemptuous. "Contempt: the action of contemning or despising; the mental attitude in which a thing is considered to be of little account, or vile, or worthless." This government perceives this Parliament, its members, to be of little account, worthless. The problem with you Tory backbenchers is that your Premier's office is as contemptuous of you as he was of every other member of Parliament. Now it's time to defend yourselves from an executive board, an executive office, a Premier and a cabinet—very, very inner-inner-circle—that treat you with contempt, that find every one of you to be nothing more than little voting machines. Here's a Premier in a government who bullies the occasional dissident.

1600

I heard from one dissident yesterday who told me he had been told he'd have to resign from caucus if he voted with the motion. What a stupid bit of advice to that backbencher. That backbencher was told that if government members voted for this motion and against their colleagues, it would be a vote of non-confidence. What a stupid observation. What a stupid comment. Whoever made that comment—I know who made it; I won't name the person—knows nothing about parliamentary history

and parliamentary procedure, and certainly has no idea of what constitutes a vote of non-confidence.

The problem is that the contempt this government shows for Parliament, the contempt it shows for taxpayers, for every single resident, it also shows for its own backbenchers, who are treated as mere voting machines, who are told in caucus meetings, "Don't worry. Just follow the Premier. He will lead you on to victory."

Well, I tell you, you've been Edselled. You've met the Edsel factor. You've acquired a brand name that couldn't be sold even if it was built on a Cadillac chassis. Mind you, there aren't too many Cadillacs out there in the Tory parking lot area. They're mostly Lexuses and any number of foreign cars; I've taken a look myself. Here are people who aren't great fans of cars their neighbour builds, North American cars that maybe Canadian workers have had a little bit of input to.

But this is about contempt, contempt that occurred when the bogus budget—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Steve Peters):** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Kormos:** That's contempt. That's a member of the Legislature who, after how many years, hasn't read the standing orders and doesn't know what a point of order is. It's contempt not to have read the standing orders so you can stand up—Mr Beaubien shows contempt when he stands up on non-points of order. That's contemptuous. If he were a novice, if he'd only been here—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Beaubien:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the member from Niagara Centre is out of order. He certainly shows contempt and no respect for this House. The Speaker who preceded you, Speaker, ruled that I was in order.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'd like some time back. It's in your power.

Mr Beaubien shows contempt when he tries to interrupt with non-points of order. That's contemptible.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I'm very pleased to join in the debate today on the motion arising from the Speaker's ruling earlier in the week, and I'd like to just clarify what the Speaker's ruling was.

The Speaker said, "From where I stand, the 2003 budget process has raised too many questions for the House not to reflect on them. In order to facilitate that exercise, I am finding that a prima facie case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do. As I have said, only the House, not the Speaker, can make a finding that there has been a contempt of the House."

The Speaker ruled that the House must decide. From the Speaker's ruling came the motion by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and I'll read that; it's sort of a motherhood-and-apple-pie motion. He put forward that this Legislative Assembly has the "undis-

puted right ... in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario," certainly a motherhood-and-apple-pie motion that would be very difficult to vote against.

At least the NDP has amended that motion to make a little clearer what we're talking about by adding, "and not to present the budget in this way constitutes a clear contempt of the House." Really, what we're talking about is the issue of contempt. I think the answer to the question, "Is the government in contempt of the Legislature?" is, "No, it is not."

Let's talk a bit about the budget process. The principal difference in this year's budget process was the location of the actual budget speech. The budget papers were deposited with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. There was a pre-budget lock-up, at which time members of the opposition and members of the media had pretty much the whole day to analyze the budget and to be questioned by the media on the budget.

Then, the actual speech was the thing that was different: it was delivered at a location other than the Legislative Assembly. However, the budget motion will still be moved. Once we're finished with this debate and once the debate on the speech from the throne is over, the budget motion will be moved in the Legislative Assembly, and following this debate, then, any bills needed to enact the budget will need to be introduced in this Legislative Assembly and pass first, second and third readings and receive royal assent.

Traditionally, the actual budget motion is normally voted on as the last order of business in December. In fact, there were many times in the NDP years when there was no budget vote held at all. But the key difference this year was the location of the actual speech.

I would say there were some merits to the process. Certainly with this year's process, there was an unbelievable amount of consultation that went on prior to forming the budget. Over 1,300 groups, individuals and organizations were consulted all across the province in the process of writing the budget.

Contrary to what was popular in the media, representatives of all those groups were invited to the location at Magna as well as to the many other locations across the province, whether it be North Bay, Thunder Bay, Ottawa or London, to actually watch the budget speech, and I'd just like to point out that that is different from the normal, traditional method of delivering the budget speech. Usually, it's delivered here in the Legislature, and it's mainly Tory invitees who are here, and usually, there is a nice, cozy little reception that goes on after the speech. My father was Treasurer for five years, and I certainly enjoyed coming to many of the budget presentations when he would be here in his nice plaid jacket, delivering the budget. I know the one thing he would be very envious of of this government is that this was a balanced budget, the fifth balanced budget in a row. I know he was working toward that, until the Liberals got back into power and started spending in their usual fashion.

From the perspective of the minister, I'm sure Minister Ecker would much prefer the traditional method, because after she had finished delivering the budget speech at Magna, she then faced 34 tough questions from groups that were involved in the process, from groups that had their specific issues, whether it be regulated child care or teachers' unions or other various interest groups that have a very specific interest and have gone to the budget consultation, usually, because they're looking for more money for their specific interest. They know their interest, they know their issue, so as soon as the budget speech was over, they had the opportunity to ask some very tough questions of the Minister of Finance. There were in fact 34 quite challenging questions for the Minister of Finance to immediately answer, so I think that was an interesting innovation in this year's budget speech.

Part of the reason this budget was done the way it was, outside of the Legislature, was that the Premier had made a commitment. He had made a commitment to deliver the budget before the end of the fiscal year: March 31, 2003. As we know and as has been the case with Conservative governments of the last few years, a promise made is a promise kept, and Ernie Eves, our Premier, is one who keeps his word. He had made a promise to deliver the budget before the end of March, before March 31, 2003, and in that, he was also promising to bring multi-year funding to the budgeting process.

I come from small business myself. I was surprised that government doesn't budget more in advance, so I think this is the way we should be going, and it's a commitment the Premier had made. He also decided that it was time for a new throne speech. He wanted to get input into that throne speech, so he started consultations through the month of March on that throne speech. In fact, there were 10,000 participants who gave their opinion of what they thought should go into the throne speech, what legislation and ideas would make Ontario a better place.

I know I went around my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka at that time, met with different groups and got input into the throne speech.

So the Premier kept his word and delivered the budget prior to the end of March, and multi-year funding was announced in the budget. Will the government deliver the budget speech outside of the Legislature again? Not likely. Was the process followed in contempt of the Legislature? No, it was not. What we should be talking about are the contents of the budget and the throne speech.

**1610**

Just to sidetrack for a second, though: if we want to talk about democratic processes, I think we have to take note of the Liberals' nomination process, which, frankly, I find very undemocratic, where you have a candidate who wants to run in a nomination race, as he should, to become the candidate of the Liberal party. He or she has been working hard, supported by the riding association, getting around, meeting people, getting their ideas together, and then they're told by Dalton McGuinty, "No,



you can't run as the Liberal candidate in this area." I think that's very unfair and undemocratic, and I'm amazed that the Liberal Party is doing that. They've done that, I believe, in at least five ridings around this province. I think that's unbelievably undemocratic.

Before I talk about the budget, I'd also like to talk about the first item of business since we got back here, and that was the SARS bill and the handling of the SARS issue. I'd like to commend the Premier on the excellent job he has done in dealing with the SARS issue. Within an hour of finding out about the first case of SARS in this province—within one hour—he had activated emergency measures and also made it clear that money was not a consideration. He gave full authority to health officials to deal with the problem, and they did an excellent job of doing so. Our front-line medical staff have done an unbelievable job of dealing with the SARS issue.

It's just amazing to me sometimes how the media makes stories that they want to make. The Premier, who has been working awfully hard and has a tough job at any time, was trying to have a couple of days off over Easter weekend, which I think any reasonable person would say is a reasonable thing to expect: that he might have some time off when he's working such long hours and so hard for the benefit of all of us here in Ontario. He happens to enjoy golf. I personally enjoy golf myself, but I didn't know it was a crime to play golf. The media made it sound like the Premier spent Easter weekend golfing. In fact, when he came to caucus he made it clear: "By the way, I haven't golfed in eight months." So this is the media making a story. "I haven't golfed in eight months. I was trying to take a little bit of time off Easter weekend, but I spent eight hours a day, the whole weekend, in touch with people, dealing with the SARS issue," and he did such an admirable job at that. It's amazing to me how the media sometimes make their own stories and don't validate the facts. I think it's unfair.

I also want to commend Minister Clement, who I think has done an excellent job with the SARS issue, especially in taking it into his own hands to head to Geneva to question the World Health Organization's ruling on the travel advisory to Toronto, which is so significant in terms of the economy of this province. I think he needs to be commended for the hard work and the great job he did on that issue. He's dealing with the West Nile virus issue now, and I know that in the budget there's \$100 million over five years directed toward the West Nile virus issue.

Talking about the media creating stories and not really doing their homework, today's stories in the newspaper had to do with special warrants and member Conway raising the issue of a special warrant that was put through March 26, as if it was something unusual; the media just printing that and making stories about it and not really doing their due diligence, if you ask me, on the issue.

Governments of all stripes have used this process to make funds available to deliver services to the people of Ontario. There is nothing unusual about the process. Without this approval, nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, municipalities, Ontario Works recipients and children's

aid societies could not have been paid. The amount of the special warrant reflects the cost of meeting the priorities of the people of Ontario, including the unknown cost of dealing with the SARS emergency. Special warrants and their effective times are put forward by the civil service, based on the amount of money required to meet their business needs. This was not a political decision. I'm sure the civil service took into account the fact that there is going to be, at some point, an election. They would be unsure of when the Legislature might be sitting, because there might be a spring election, there might be a fall election, there might be an election next spring. So they have to take that into account in terms of the amount of the special warrant.

The approval process and the legislative review of special warrants is the same as it was under the Liberal and NDP governments since 1985. The order in council was published in Votes and Proceedings, which is distributed to all members and is available to the public on the assembly Web site, on May 1. It has been in the legislative library since April 30. So it sounds like it has really been a big secret, as was reported in the media and as was the accusation. To suggest this was secretive is absolutely ridiculous. Special warrants are still subject to scrutiny by the public or the Legislature. They will be subject to review by the standing committee on estimates, the same as always.

It is certainly interesting to note that in 1995-96, the year that the NDP government met, I understand, only 15 days in the whole year, 60% of their spending was achieved through special warrants. In 1987-88, in 1986-87 and in 1985-86 the Liberals used special warrants for their spending. So for them to be so surprised about this process and for the media to report it without questioning it is not very responsible.

Getting back to the substance of the budget, which is what I think we should be talking about, and I'll look forward to when this debate is over so we can get on with the budget debate and with the good things that are happening, certainly the budget dealt with continuing tax cuts, completing the additional 20% reduction in personal income tax by January 1, 2004, providing about \$900 million in additional tax relief; reducing the corporate income tax rate for small business to 5% in 2004 and to 4% in 2005—and I think of the many small businesses around Parry Sound-Muskoka, the heart of our economy in Parry Sound-Muskoka, the thousands of small businesses that generate all the tax dollars that we use for all the spending on health care and education that is so important to the people of this province—reducing the corporate income tax rate for manufacturing and processing firms to 10% on January 1, 2004, 9% on January 1, 2005, and 8% on January 1, 2006. I think about the larger businesses like Tembec, the hardwood flooring plant in Huntsville, whom I was talking to the other day. They were concerned about exchange rates and some other cost pressures. We have to make sure that the tax system is competitive so there will be those jobs there in Huntsville, so there will be jobs at Dura Automotive in Brace-

bridge, so there will be jobs at Connor Industries in Parry Sound, where they make these fantastic Stanley aluminium boats that are so popular around the world and, of course, in our beautiful section of the world on Georgian Bay as well.

It's worth noting just how well the Ontario economy is doing. The Ontario economy has done unbelievably well the last six or seven years. I don't think we should take that for granted, because I think sometimes we can forget just how well the economy is doing. Ontario's economy leads the G7 in manufacturing job growth, and not just by a bit, but significantly leads the G7. From 1996 to 2001, we've led the G7 nations in manufacturing job growth—and those are good jobs.

We're also eliminating the surtax for people earning less than \$75,000 per year by January 1, 2005. We're introducing measures that would benefit seniors, families, people with disabilities and their caregivers. We're planning to reduce the capital tax rates by 10% on January 1, 2004, with an intention to eliminate the capital tax by the time the federal government eliminates the capital tax. The capital tax is a very non-productive tax. It's a tax on the assets of a business, whether you make money or don't make money. It is a tax which we wish to eliminate. So as I mentioned, the small business tax is being reduced. Also, the threshold below which the lower, small business tax rate applies will increase from \$360,000 next January 1 to over \$400,000 in 2005.

1620

It's also important in the budget that municipalities are going to be receiving a significant increase in multi-year funding: an 18% increase in municipal funding from 2005-06 over the 2002-03 budget level.

Also, there is a program to invest \$40 million over five years for municipal fire services in small rural communities, to assist them in purchasing new emergency fire equipment. I know I heard from Stephen Hernen, the chief in Huntsville and Lake of Bays, asking about that program just a couple of days ago. I've certainly had the pleasure of going around the riding, where at least half a dozen fire departments have purchased new fire trucks through the NOHFC funding—in Carney, in Britt, in Whitestone, in Georgian Bay township and many others. The government continues to invest in the north through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. In fact, there's going to be \$100 million in projects flowing in this year's budget to invest in economic development projects and critical infrastructure projects around the north.

I met with municipal officials at the rural Ontario municipal conference and at the NOMA conference and the FONOM conference, and they've made it really clear that the small northern municipalities need help with those big-ticket items. I'm very pleased to see provincial investment in such things as the new Bracebridge Centennial Centre—I think there's a couple of million dollars in that; in the Rosseau waterfront project; in arenas in Port Carling and Bala; in the Bala sports park, where there are going to be soccer fields and other recreational facilities; in the Huntsville civic centre—I had the pleas-

ure of being there last week, and some \$2.6 million is being invested in this new downtown civic centre, where they're regenerating the downtown of Huntsville; in the Stockey centre in Parry Sound, which is also the Bobby Orr Hall of Fame; in Gravenhurst, in the Muskoka wharf project. So we're seeing some pretty significant investments in northern Ontario.

Unfortunately, I'm running out of time, so I don't have time to talk about other great initiatives like the northern tax incentive zone, which was announced by the Premier last week to such applause.

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to correct my own record.

The member for Don Valley East was shouting across the floor some totally misinformed things, and unfortunately I responded by calling him an idiot. I'd like to withdraw that, and say he's just misinformed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We appreciate the opportunity anyone wants to take in correcting his record.

Further debate.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** A lot of people were shocked and surprised at seeing this government present a budget in an auto parts warehouse. What I'd like to do today—we were upset, naturally, but many other people were outside. What I'd like to do today is establish that this is not a new attitude on the part of this government. In discussing this with my staff, they said, "You know, you wrote a paper on democracy in Ontario when you were pretty upset about things two and a half years ago. Why don't you share some of that, lest some people think this is a single act of presenting a budget showing that to ignore the Legislature is A-OK?" I would like to do that.

I recall at the time feeling that most people were aware of the many changes—remember, this was two and a half years ago—in the province over the last few years: restructuring of hospitals and health care, massive changes in our educational system and in our tax structure, municipal amalgamations and downloading—all very important issues, to be sure.

But at the same time those changes were being made, changes were happening also in our Legislature. I think the public would be shocked—and I wrote this two and a half years ago. "I believe many of those changes were indeed for the worse, and they've made us by far, in my opinion, the least democratic jurisdiction in this whole Dominion, substantially substandard amongst many parliamentarians and many Parliaments in the world."

The thing which stimulated that thought two and a half or three years ago was what happened on the evening of December 16, 1997, when "the Mike Harris government was trying to quickly wrap up the ... inaugural session of the 36th Parliament. That night they proceeded with a motion that grouped together five separate bills from different ministries that had been before the House and attempted to move time allocation"—limiting time on debate—"on all of them together, at the same time. It was a radical departure from the procedure of the House, even by their standards. Despite our protests, the Speaker of



the House agreed that they could proceed with what became known as the omnibus time allocation."

Frankly, "I was stunned. In a matter of moments and with an apparent wave of the hand, the government had been able to shut down debate on five separate, important pieces of legislation. As an opposition MPP I questioned what my purpose of even being in the Legislature was. In my previous political experience, I had naively assumed that all parties in the assembly had to agree to amend the standing orders ... of the House. Apparently a simple majority" of any government "was all that was required," which means that any government with a majority can change the rules and procedures of this particular House, which is exactly what the Harris government did.

"There can be no mistaking the timing of the motion that night. It was the end of the session and the opposition and the press were weary," so they rammed something through in a flash. This was apparently what the Common Sense Revolution was all about. I was most distraught, to say the least.

I want to talk about the tools of the official opposition: what do they have available to them? They're "fairly common to most parliamentary jurisdictions: every sessional day, there is a question period where the opposition will hold the government accountable. As well, there is debate on second and third reading of a bill that has come before the House. Further, the opposition participates in the various committees that are formed to scrutinize and possibly amend legislation, or monitor government management and procedure. Another feature that is useful for members outside of cabinet"—on all sides of the House, by the way—"is the once weekly debate on private members' bills.

"On the government side of the aisle, the instruments of power are" far more ominous, powerful and "concrete: the formulation and implementation of legislation," especially if it's a majority government, "a large and well-trained bureaucracy, large executive staffs and budgets, the ability to make appointments to agencies, boards and commissions. Once in power there are a few trends that are true of duly elected governments in democracies. Most political observers know that governments will attempt to consolidate their power and streamline" ways of doing business in order to "control the agenda." That's a natural inclination. "If they are flexible they will also be retooling parts of their program as they move through their term in office. Sometimes we see this happen once the so-called 'honeymoon' period is over....

"In my experience at the executive level, one of the hardest tasks for a sitting government is to prioritize its agenda. To ensure that it is properly consultative in forming policy and legislation, and still tailor the whole package to fit into a legislative schedule and timetable. There should be no underestimating how difficult this can be"; there's no question about that.

1630

With all of these powers, it is very difficult for the opposition and very frustrating when the opportunities to challenge the government are taken away. "The truth is

that when faced with a fixed legislative timetable, governments have to streamline ... their agenda"; there's no question about that.

"Governments counteract the problem in a number of ways. Often they try to bolster public support by 'educating'" or providing educational programs. "Many governments will lean towards centralizing their powers. Rarely will a government, like this one has, play fast and loose with rules and procedures of the Legislature in order to expedite their agenda without the nuisance of having to call the assembly into session."

I use the word "nuisance" because I believe that is reflective of the attitude of the Harris-Eves government: that the Legislature is basically a nuisance. "You voted us in. You gave us the power with a program. Step aside and let us implement it." That is the attitude—very little appreciation or understanding of the role that the Parliament has to play. That's the kind of thing that you might see in other parts of the world but that we have not been so used to here in Canada.

What "is becoming apparent"—and I said this two and a half years ago—"is a growing contempt for the Legislature and an attempt to stifle debate when they are there. That is hardly all. It is merely a symptom of a more problematic attitude by this government: the Legislature gets in the way.

"Perhaps it would be instructive for us to take a closer look"—and I outlined a number of the changes to legislation this particular government has made since 1995.

"The unprecedented, constant usage of time allocation"—limiting time—"to cut off debate on legislation: a tool put into the rules for use on the odd occasion"—the odd occasion—"when legislative debate is bogged down; it is now in everyday use by the government. Both the total number of times it has been used and the percentage of times it has been used as per the government's total legislative agenda are staggeringly high. Debate was terminated over 70% of the time in the last session." I made that comment in 1999, and it still continues. "This is far beyond the bounds of any previous government in provincial history. It is in excess of the combined total of all other provinces' use of it. The government does not want to sit in the House, but they proceed to stifle debate when they do.

"The frequent use of omnibus legislation: the grouping together of what are essentially many bills under the banner of one bill; this is a popular way" in which this government has rammed through a variety of things. It was done with Bill 25, with the amalgamation of a number of cities in Ontario, which included Ottawa, Haldimand-Norfolk, Toronto, Hamilton, and there was one other—I forget which one it was. It provided for the formation of a restructuring commission and the reorganization of many of these cities. "It was a massive, sweeping bill that had different aspects for five very different" geographical "areas. It was introduced as one bill, time-allocated and rammed through without any amendments for its many flaws. We do not sit all year—and then we

have several weeks' worth of work put in front of us to do"—sometimes in hours. "In the case of the so-called mega-week a few years back, we were faced with the prospect of massive omnibus bills every day of the week that basically restructured the province." It rendered not only members with an inability to respond appropriately—because there was no time to study the implications of what this was; it made it very difficult for the media and the press likewise to get into that kind of a venture.

I said question period, when the Premier and often the finance minister are seldom here. That's a tool of holding people to account.

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** Where's Dalton?

**Mr Patten:** He's not the Premier yet.

The number of committees, as you well know, has been cut by almost 30%. "The committee hearing stage represents an important opportunity for both expert witnesses and other interested parties to speak to ... the bill in question. I can tell you that from my experience much meaningful input and many worthwhile amendments have come from this stage" of truly listening to those who are most affected and want to share what the impact of a particular bill may be and suggest some ways it could be stronger, have less damage and do the job it was intended to do. "There has been a steady reduction in the use of committee as a legislative tool. Oftentimes detailed legislation (the kind that is best subject to review) is being ordered to bypass the scrutiny of committee and straight to third reading where it will carry with the government's majority. Committees now rarely travel outside Toronto, further reducing their ability to sound out" the full range of Ontarians and the range of input.

"The rigging of sessional days": most people don't know this, but I think they should. "In order to further expedite the process and avoid the nuisance of the Legislature, the government has redefined what ... we would normally call a working day. In their haste to get bills through, they found that there were precedents in the standing orders that prevented them from moving a piece of legislation through several readings in what was commonly regarded as a single sessional day. So they broke the day in half at 6 pm" and forced the legislation into an evening session, and then redefined the evening session "as a different sessional day." It's one calendar day, but now they could call it two days, and when you're required, at second reading, to have at least four sessional days of debate, that means they can get something through second reading in two days and away you go to third reading, and it's happened on more than one occasion.

Sometimes members of the press have said, "Hey, was there a bill that went through last week? It went through so quickly." It's another way to try to make things more efficient in the eyes of the government.

"The politicization of previously non-partisan aspects of House business"—private members' business, as it should be called, and should be exclusively for private

members—the increased whipping of votes. The government has the power to prorogue the House, which means that anything on the order paper is dead unless the government chooses to recall it, and seldom do they do that.

"Clauses in large bills which de facto eliminate the Legislature from the process: the government has, on several different occasions, attempted to eliminate the need to come before the Legislature to move amendments on their large and controversial bills. Amendments would be made in cabinet and passed by regulation. It was first done with Bill 160, the massive restructuring of education, and then on several subsequent occasions. In early December"—1999; I wrote this three years ago—"we watched in vain as they built a 'sledgehammer clause' into the aforementioned omnibus Bill 25 on municipal amalgamation," which meant that "the cabinet grants itself wholesale power to redraw municipalities with their amendments and we, the elected opposition" and backbenchers on the government side "watch as spectators—no discussion, no debate, no voting, no questions."

In other words, with these pieces of legislation they continue to build into the legislation that henceforth cabinet, by regulation, would have the power to do many things that realistically should come back to the House for amendment. But, no, they wanted to do that.

The government we in Attawa have experienced for most of the last eight years "has been a paradox. On the face of it," they always want to be saying they're about decentralization: "tax reductions, downloading of responsibilities on municipalities, deregulation and privatization. In this and other ways, they prefer to portray themselves as the average Ontarian"—on the outside of "a monolithic structure."

Premier Harris used to say, "We are not government; we are here to fix it." Well, if he as Premier wasn't the government at the time, I don't know who was. They claim to have made it more accessible, sensible and accountable.

"In the Legislature, however, a different picture emerges. The government has enacted procedural changes that reflect a clear desire to move the process away from the open scrutiny of the Legislature and the people who elect them. Many observers feel that power has even moved away from the executive ... and more directly into the hands of the unaccountable, inaccessible few in the office of the Premier—the privileged few on the inside, the rest of us, elected representatives and Ontarians, on the outside, mere witnesses at the scene. The government of Ontario is far less accessible and far less accountable than it was five or 10 years ago, or than it has ever been."

1640

In a column written two and a half years ago Ian Urquhart said: "... there is a worrisome trend here: the presidentialization of Ontario politics, with all the power concentrated in the Office of the Premier." And he concluded, "The pendulum has swung too far. Unfortunately, few seem to care beyond the precinct of Queen's Park."



He wrote that two and a half years ago and I know he feels even more strongly today.

Jim Coyle, who is a columnist in Toronto, says:

"It looks as if one of the choicest pieces of real estate in all of greater Toronto—owned by the same family for generations, lovingly maintained, recently renovated, with old-world charm and all modern conveniences—will soon be on the market.

"Hurry. It won't last. Not this oasis in the heart of the city. Not when eager homebuyers get a look at some of the features.

"Stunning centre hall. Spacious principal rooms. Ideal for entertaining. Many upgrades. Steps to park. Overlooks sunny south garden" etc. Of course, he is speaking of the Ontario Legislature.

"The government of Premier Ernie Eves may have heaped the final indignity on the old Pink Palace this week when it announced plans to release a budget on March 27 outside the Legislature at a made-for-TV event broadcast by satellite and on the Internet.

"What will come next in the Conservative government's relentless debasement of this province's institutions?

"Elections in which MPPs are chosen by scratch-and-win tickets? Bills passed according to which section of the studio audience cheers loudest? Courts in which the convicted learn their sentences by rolling up the rim?

"It is just the latest act of disrespect for parliamentary tradition from an administration that has systematically emasculated the Legislature and which says outright it doesn't think the public gives a fig for such stuff.

"But it might just be that this is a gambit too cute by half, one of the bigger miscalculations since Joe Clark failed to get the math right before a vote that toppled his government in 1979.

"Coming as it does on the eve of an election," treating this in such a fashion is truly contemptuous.

My time is up. I support the motion that henceforth all Parliaments receive budgets first that are developed by government and presented to the people of our Legislature. The budget, in no way kindly, even condemns the government for this kind of action.

My hope today was to illustrate that the attitude of this government is nothing new, that there is this built-in, I don't know why, disdain and discomfort and a sense of the Legislature as simply a nuisance; that we should be able to proceed as quickly as possible with our business plans in order to enact why we were elected in the first place, with no understanding of what it means to operate in a democratic Parliament in which all the people of Ontario—which means some of them are not from the government side—have a chance to voice their opinion and be respected and that this House be respected as well.

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** I'm particularly pleased to be able to add a few words with respect to this whole subject of what I think is the term "democracy."

It's interesting, because a lot of people don't know my background, but I am actually celebrating my 20th year

in public office, and very proudly so. I am not one of those professional politicians; I actually got elected I think quite by accident. I was attending university. I went back to university as a mature student, and one of the requirements of being accepted into university was that you needed to take four 100-level general ed courses, and one of them was in humanities. So I got a very quick lesson while I was working full-time, trying to raise children, and going to university, sometimes four nights a week. They were tough days, but I learned very quickly how to analyze the material that was required reading in order to pass those first courses.

It's interesting, because we've heard the opposition talk quite vigorously against our government's decision to present the budget directly to the people of Ontario, yet they fail to talk about the prevalence of what I would consider to be highly questionable democratic processes within their own party.

Democracy is a deeply rooted tradition in western society, as we know. The members on this side of the House are adamant about protecting the democratic values that are what I consider to be the foundations of the parliamentary system, and I think it's important that we do perhaps visit the historical origins of today's modern parliamentary system. You really need to understand not only its history but its development. This is why I actually found the education that I got in a Canadian university as a mature student 20 years ago—a little over 20 years ago, actually—extremely interesting. I have therefore volunteered to help members opposite learn and appreciate our democratic tradition. I think it's really important that they listen to this, because as many of us know in this place, the first practice of democracy can be traced back to the cradle of western civilization, which is none other than Greece. I know most certainly that the member for Davenport will be particularly interested in this particular interpretation of democracy.

It was indeed the city-states of ancient Greece, such as Periclean Athens, that first governed by democratic rule.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Mushinski:** I will be getting to oligarchical complexes in a minute, Mr Kormos.

It is there that the democratic tradition first took root, as far back as the fifth century BC. Greece, as the birthplace of democracy, holds a unique place in history. It's the Athenian belief in democratic principles that was so strong that they not only allowed but they expected eligible citizens to participate in the governing process, something that I think some members in this House, especially on the opposition benches, seem to have forgotten, or maybe they didn't learn when they took History 101. Greece has emerged as the ideal example of the people's right to self-determination and self-government.

I'm sure many of us have noticed that there is hardly a discussion or debate on the subject of democracy that doesn't include references to ancient Greece, and well it should be, because Greece will always be held up to us as an example of a successful and fully functioning direct democracy—a very important distinction.

Although the western world has witnessed many forms of government since that classical period, democracy has become—and I think this is important too—a continuously re-emerging theme for newly developing as well as established states across and around the world.

The term “democracy” itself is very telling. It is, I believe, the reason why nation after nation, state after state, country after country, converts to its practice. It is also the reason why so many people choose Ontario and Canada as their home. The word “democracy” is actually made up of two Greek words: “*dēmos*,” which means “people,” and “*kratos*,” which means “power.” In the dictionary definition, “democracy” is referred to as government by the people, in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.

1650

It's enough to turn to Abraham Lincoln to summarize the rather dry dictionary definition. In his words, a democratic government is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The concept is complex, yet simple, and it's beautiful at the same time.

As members of an elected assembly—and I know you jest, Mr Kormos, but it is an important lesson to be learned—I believe that we should all reflect on the meaning of the most compelling word in this place: democracy. We should remember that the responsibility that is placed on our shoulders is by the people of Ontario.

Greek or, to be more specific, Athenian belief in the democratic idea was so strong that the practice endured for 200 years after oligarchic attempts to suppress it, Mr Kormos.

I believe I am joined by all of my colleagues on this side of the House when I say that our belief in democracy is equally strong. Athenian democracy sparked centuries of debate on the right of the people to participate in the political process. The most famous philosophers and political scientists in western culture—Plato, Aristotle, and later Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, to name but a few—have contributed greatly to this debate, and I learned all of this in Humanities 101 as a mature student at a Canadian university in Ontario. It is their influence that steers our understanding of the political process and our own form of government.

As this debate expanded over the centuries, other ideas, surprisingly enough, began to surface—ideas that truly shaped our understanding of our communities, our society and in fact our perceptions of the world. Ideas such as freedom, equality and human rights became virtual synonyms for the word “democracy.” These ideas have evoked some of the most moving expressions of human will and intellect. It is, after all, the democratic idea that sparked Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence in 1776 and motivated Poland's solidarity movement in the 1980s.

Democracy became much more than just a system of government. It has inspired people to fight for it and often to die for it. History is filled with too many examples of people braving tanks, armies and facing

brutality, all for the right to vote, to speak freely, to think freely and to be free. This was certainly true of the Hungarian uprising in Budapest in 1956, where thousands were killed while protesting the practices of the totalitarian Soviet regime.

Examples of human courage in the name of freedom and democracy span the globe. They are seen in student protests in the Far East and in the democratic reforms in Africa; they were present in the work of missionaries in Latin America, where authoritarian regimes undermined the people's right to self-government; and they are present in art, music and literature.

I believe that as members of this House, we have a responsibility not only to our constituents but to all those who have fought to protect the democratic traditions born in Athens so many thousands of years ago; traditions that, I am reluctant to say, we sometimes take for granted.

Here in Ontario, we have had the luxury of living in the certainty that our rights and our freedoms are protected. They have become an innate part of who we are. Our government is built on the pillars of democracy. We believe in the sovereignty of the people, we believe in government based upon the consent of the governed and we believe in the rule of the majority with full protection of minority rights.

We ensure free and fair elections at every step of the political process. We value equality before the law, respect limits on government and we govern to ensure social, economic and political pluralism. The government encourages tolerance, co-operation and compromise, and it is committed to sustaining all these values upon which the province of Ontario and this great country are built.

This government has fought for greater accountability and transparency at every level and in all policies. We believe that Ontarians have a right to know what is being done on their behalf and that we, as government, have an obligation to our citizens to always, always include them in the governing of our province.

Many of my constituents have come to Ontario from places where the term “the government's obligation” has absolutely no meaning, where the political freedoms of speech, expression, equality, right to vote and freedom from persecution were unattainable dreams. They have come from places where political participation meant publicized acclamation of candidates already appointed by those in power—now, does that sound familiar?—where elections were staged and the media, under the government's control, manipulated. I doubt that any member in this House could argue that we have been able to manipulate the media in Ontario.

They have come from places where the government told them, the people, what to do rather than ask them, “What should we do?” They have come here to start a new life, to experience all the rights, all the privileges and all the responsibilities of citizenship. They are ready and willing to take on those responsibilities.

I consider it my duty as the member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough Centre to ensure that the



political freedom they yearn for is protected and that they indeed are entitled to the rights that inspired so many to travel halfway around the world to obtain. My constituents want to hear, furthermore, that they have the right to know what this government is doing for them. That is why I am so proud of our government and its commitment to ensure the people's full participation in the political process.

From the public's participation in the nomination of candidates for provincial elections to public consultation on policy and legislation, we have shown our commitment to democratic values. Can every party in this place say the same thing? I think not.

The 20th century has seen many strides made for the practice of democracy. North and South America are virtually entirely democratic, new democracies have sprung up in Asia, and the Middle East is calling for its own turn to take a chance at democracy. For decades, Ontario and Canada have been the promised land for those living on the other side of the Iron Curtain under the fist of a totalitarian regime. The policies of glasnost and perestroika in the USSR in the 1980s have resulted in the breakup of the Soviet regime, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the first democratic elections in Russia and the old Soviet republics.

Taking a step back in democratic development is not an option. We are committed to continuing the spread of democracy, to get closer to the model that etched Periclean Athens into the mind of every scholar and every student of history, political science and philosophy, something, again, that was inculcated when I was a student of political philosophy at a university in Canada, in Ontario.

1700

To quote Samuel Huntington of Harvard University, "The two most decisive factors affecting the future consolidation and expansion of democracy will be economic development and political leadership." I know that our government has worked tirelessly to ensure economic growth to the people of Ontario. I know we have the leadership that fully and unequivocally believes in democratic principles and nurtures the rights of the people to participate in the political process. We believe in the power and the right of the people to decide whom to charge with the responsibility of being elected as a representative to the Legislative Assembly. I can't say the same is true of the opposition Liberals.

This government has invited and encouraged the people to be a meaningful and vital part of the political process. I have always believed in participatory democracy since the first day I decided to run for election. We ensured that the people of Ontario had a real contribution to the way in which their province is governed. We ensured that it was the people's will that became the government's agenda. And this government took the agenda directly to those to whom it is responsible.

Over the weekend, I decided to leaf through the Liberal platform. There were many points that caught my eye but a recurring theme was particularly interesting: the

leader persisted in referring to "divine right." How appropriate, I thought. Isn't the leader infused with the power to bypass the people by appointing, rather than electing, its own candidates? I think so. I find once again that the Liberals are much like Hippocrates: strong in theory but very weak in practice. In fact, they criticize the government's decision to present the budget directly to the people while they shamelessly continue to bypass the democratic process in their own practices. It is saddening to see the democratic traditions born in Greece stumble over the Liberal Party practices in Ontario.

I believe that in delivering the budget to the people of Ontario, the government acted in the best interests of this province. We delivered the budget directly to those whom it affects most: the many groups, organizations and individuals who, through the public consultation process, contributed to its content. That the opposition doesn't like it is of no surprise to me or, I believe, any of my colleagues. After all, they have made it their life's work to oppose change. Two hundred and eight tax cuts, and in every budget since June 1995, the Liberals have opposed every one. I can anticipate that they will oppose the additional 17 tax cuts that have been announced in this year's budget.

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I'm delighted to participate in this very special session on Mr Carr's decision, as the Speaker of this Legislature, when he found a *prima facie* case of contempt.

Let's look at what the previous speaker, the honourable member from Scarborough Centre, just indicated. She gave us a pretty good definition of democracy when she started to talk about the Greek model. But we also know that the Greek model was the beginning of democracy; it evolved. It's the beginning of democracy because at that point it was still an elite institution. Who had the power to vote? Only those who had land. In the meantime, of course, we had other issues to overcome, such as a certain amount of education. At one time only those who had a grade 10 education were able to vote. Even today, in some countries women do not have a chance to vote. So democracy is an evolving model. I'm just hoping, when she began to talk about Greece and the beginning of democracy, she did not mean that the model has evolved to such an extent that the Legislature becomes irrelevant.

Today, that surely has to be one of the main issues of debate: has this Legislature become irrelevant to the functioning of the government? I've listened very carefully to Richard Patten, the member from Ottawa, who gave many historic examples. He gave examples of many newspaper editors and assistants who said in fact that too much power has evolved into the Office of the Premier. We agree to that extent: too much power has evolved; too much power has been placed in the hands of one person, who is then able to manipulate the system to whatever ends he or she sees fit.

Our thinking is—and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, has indicated in our change to democracy, our proposals for democracy—that this evolving model where we place

so much power in the hands of one person must be changed. I'm going to be speaking about this in a few minutes, but certainly I'm saying to the member that if there is so much power in the hands of one person, then that person, if he or she is a corrupt person, is going to cause us a major problem. He or she will take away, at his or her whim, the right of the Legislature not only to debate but also to look at the budget and say, "I don't like this item. I'd like to scrutinize another item but I can't, because the Legislature has decided, or the person has decided, to attempt closure on a certain debate."

For instance, how many closures have we seen in this Legislature? We've seen that 60% of the bills that came through here have been closed in terms of discussion. That is really too much power in the hands of one person, who can then decide what issues come forward, what issues can be debated, and the very fact of how long debate can last.

As you can see, we are in real danger of becoming irrelevant when so much power has evolved into the hands of one person. Irrelevant why? Because, I might simply say, if we don't agree with the Speaker today, if we do not vote for the Speaker's contempt ruling, then we are really in danger of becoming puppets in the hands of those who wield power in Ontario. In fact, we become puppets as well in the hands of those other Parliaments that have unlimited power. We must have a system of checks and balances. When the member for Scarborough Centre says, "Yes, the Greek model is great," she surely does not include the lack of a system that wanted to include checks and balances.

We can refer to the great democratic philosopher, Alexis De Tocqueville, who came to America from France. He looked at the American model and said, "Really, is there democracy in America?" He then describes the model of checks and balances. I would submit to you that the question to all Ontarians should be: have we seen a system of checks and balances as it is promulgated here in Ontario today? Where is the system of checks and balances? Are there checks and balances here if the Premier gets unlimited power in his office, in his hands? Surely there can't be checks and balances if one person decides what to do and has you to do it. He tells you how to vote. He scripts every speech of each minister. The ministers are becoming simply puppets in the hands of those who are wielding this unlimited power.

1710

Alexis de Tocqueville said there can only be real democracy if there's a system of checks and balances in place. If we're looking around Ontario today, my question is this: where are the checks and balances? Surely there has to be a judiciary that is totally separate from the government. The Legislature must be separate from the executive. This kind of a model is checking each other—one arm of the government must check the other arm of the government. But of course we, as members, who have been empowered by the residents who are voting for us, have a special responsibility. That responsibility is to

ensure that we represent our residents right here in an unhampered way. What's happened with this budget is simply that the government decided they were going to call an election and they needed the warrants.

That leads me, of course, to another issue that's so important in terms of a lack of checks and balances. I have a letter here from Michael Bryant, one of our colleagues, and he says that to prorogue the House and then execute a special warrant for an amount exceeding half the annual budget surely runs afoul of our century-old supply process. What's the ground for that? He lists the Legislative Assembly Act, and sections 53 and 54 of the Constitution Act of 1867, which is very clear that one minister has a special statutory and constitutional obligation to ensure the legality of all actions of this government. That cannot be really legal, when you think about it. Well, I'll take that back; it may be legal, but it certainly cannot be ethically moral. That's not possible here. You can't think to call an election, to prorogue the House up to April 30, and in the meantime say, "Well, wait a minute. We need money to run this government because we're going to call an election before the 30th. We need this money. We need special warrants." Of course, you can only fool some of the people some of the time. The press is not stupid. The residents who voted for us are not stupid.

What do we see today as the reflection of what happened here? I'm just looking at Christina Blizzard, who is a very independent journalist. She says, for instance, "Are Tories caught in their own web?" Well, they certainly are. The other section in the Toronto Sun also says, "MPP decries 'secret' fund." They know there was a secret fund. This is a slush fund for the election. But imagine this; when you think about it, it really makes you mad: the government decides to take \$37 billion and run it through without any scrutiny. They want to spend \$37 billion and run it through this House without us having had the chance to scrutinize the budget.

At the beginning, of course, they didn't even want to come here. They did not wish to come here. They took it outside of the House so there would be an unbalanced situation. They decided at that particular time that they could control the environment and that there would be no scrutinizing questions asked about this budget. We know why. Yes, we know why: they wanted to have a budget without scrutiny.

**Mr Gerretsen:** No.

**Mr Ruprecht:** Yes. We all know it on this side of the House, and you know it on the other side of the House, because there is a \$2-billion shortfall—

**Mr Gerretsen:** Two billion dollars?

**Mr Ruprecht:** Two billion dollars. The Dominion Bond Rating Service says \$2 billion. The Toronto Dominion Bank says \$1.5 billion. But surely, it's certainly around a \$2-billion shortfall.

They took the budget out from here and into a place where they would not be found out, where they would not be criticized. They took it out because there is this big hole in the budget. Every one of you sitting here



today, every one of you is fully aware that these facts and figures are correct. In fact, we could quote you more of the authorities who decided that, "Yes, we looked at this budget of the Conservatives and it's very clear that this budget has a big hole of \$2 billion."

You didn't want us to discuss it. You didn't want the people of Ontario to find out about it. You wanted to be sure that this was not scrutinized. That's why you took the budget out and that's why your ministers signed those special warrants, because you are getting ready for an election campaign.

Democracy is a great thing and it is evolving. We know that in 17th-century Britain a great writer appeared whose name was Hobbes, and he wrote an interesting book. Mr Hobbes says that government is a leviathan. What is a leviathan? It's an eye-bulging beast of which you've got to be afraid. You've got to be afraid of a government that manipulates. In Britain in those days, life, he says, was nasty, brutish and short. It is up to us in the 21st century to try to ensure that life is not short, that life is not brutish, but that people are being helped.

What kinds of models of government would we like to emulate? What are the kinds of models that we would like to see perpetuated? It surely can't be a model where powers evolve to the point where a tyranny can exist, where dictatorship can experience democracy and where there can only be the dictatorship of the majority. The majority is sometimes tyranny, and that to me is very important. We have to set up our institutions to the point where there are checks and balances so that the tyranny of the majority cannot affect people's lives every day.

It is important that we have conventions. It is important that we have traditions. I'm asking you, do not destroy the conventions, the traditions and the agreements that have evolved for a better system of democracy than we have had in the past. Democracy indeed is evolving, it is true, but while it is evolving it must become better. Democracy must become better. How do we make it better? Democracy is better if there is more people input, if we are all-embracing, if every resident is embraced by this system of democracy. Democracy cannot be for the elite, as it was in Greece. Democracy today must increase and include all groups, whether it is ethnic groups or special interest groups; it cannot simply be for the friends of the government.

Herein lies the big difference. We are a system of government which promulgates inclusiveness. We want to embrace everybody. We know that if one person hurts, the rest of us hurt. If one person has SARS, the rest of us might get it. But this government doesn't get that idea. This government doesn't understand that idea of inclusiveness. No, you don't understand that, because what I've seen here over the last few years is not inclusiveness; it is exclusiveness. It is only including a certain group and favouring them.

Our system of democracy must evolve so we have respect for the traditions and the very aspects where we can enter into discussion to at least debate the major items of a government's budget. That has to be an idea

that should have been taken for granted. We should not be here today to discuss the very basis of democracy, the very basis of discussing a budget which is so vital to every person who lives in Ontario. That should not be the focus of discussion. We have been pushed into it. We have been pushed into discussing this because we have a government that is going to face contempt of this Legislature. I challenge even one person in the government to say to us today, "Is it not true that we could have done better? Is it not true that we should not have had this budget away from this Legislature where we could control it? Is it not true it would have been better for everybody concerned," including the residents which you represent?

1720

It would have been better for everybody to bring the budget here. Is there not even one person who understands the ethics of those facts, that you come here with a budget? Is there not even one person among you who understands the morality of this fact that we should come here first to discuss the budget because it affects every resident of Ontario? Is there not one among you who understands the very morality of this principle?

I challenge this government. I challenge them to find in their own hearts what we're saying must certainly be true to some extent, and I would only hope that there will at least be one person who can see, "Yes, the Speaker's ruling was right."

In fact, Mr Conway, who made the original motion, did not necessarily say, "We condemn all of you." No, he simply reasserts the right to have the budget read where it should have been read the first time. It is such a basic lesson in politics; it is Administration 101. It's such a basic idea.

We know that when you look around this chamber, there are gargoyles that are staring down at you and me. These gargoyles were placed there in the first place to take away the arrogance and to take away the mean-spiritedness that sometimes emanates from each member. Mr O'Toole is as much an example as you and me. He is nobody really different. It slipped out of him. He's a human being, and when he's aggravated enough, something happens; sometimes something snaps. He cannot really be condemned for it, because Mr O'Toole is me; Mr O'Toole is you. Mr O'Toole is every one of us, because we're in a system of confrontation. But our job is also to mitigate that confrontation, because our job is to be very inclusive. That's why I ask you the question, which system of government do you admire most? Do you admire the system of government which has more power, which evolves the power to the hands of only one person, or do you admire a system of democracy where there's input, where there's discussion, where there's compromise, even for the fact that there are problems and there consequently could be some discussion between the two of us so we cannot agree?

We're asking for an open system. We must have a system that is open. We admire a system that is not ethnocentric. We don't admire a system that is revenge-

ful. No, we don't believe in, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." If that were the case, we would have evolved a different kind of system.

Let's not be ethnocentric. Let's not only help our friends who are helping us, but let's be all-inclusive. This system of democracy which we have proposed, under Dalton McGuinty, is all-inclusive; it includes everybody, because that's what it says.

Consequently, I say to you, Mr Speaker, I am in agreement with Mr Carr's ruling and I would hope that this government will find—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I'm happy to have 20 minutes to speak to the amendment introduced by my friend Gilles Bisson from Timmins-James Bay. It really is hard to believe—for those of you watching—that you're paying us to make these kinds of speeches that we make here every day, but it's true. For the last four days I don't know what you've been listening to, but I get the sense that most of you are wondering, what is it that we're debating?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** That's what I'm saying, about the fact that people are paying us to debate God knows what, because just the other day, or last week, the Premier, Ernie Eves, said he would never, ever do this again. So if he admits that he would never present the budget outside of this place again, why are we debating this issue? We've got so many speeches by so many members saying so many things, including the member for Scarborough Centre, who must have consulted some Greek oracle that told her we should be talking about Greek democracy for 20 minutes, for God's sake.

I think we should be listening to what the Premier said: he learned from his mistakes and would never do it again. If you listen to the Premier, you would think the other members would indeed repent, as I believe he did. You would think that the remarks by the Speaker would encourage the members to repent or that there would possibly be an act of contrition or maybe a little prayer. But the arrogance of each and every one of the members: I remember last Thursday after the Speaker made his ruling and we went immediately into the debate, most of the Conservative members were so angry at the ruling that they went after the Speaker, one after the other. I couldn't believe it.

**Ms Mushinski:** Name names.

**Mr Marchese:** The member for Scarborough Centre says, "Name names." I'd rather not do that, because names have already been named and been made quite public. So what we expect from the members, once the Speaker has ruled, is that they show some humility, some remorse for the mistake they made, and move on. Dispense with this debate we're having about whether the Speaker was right or wrong and move on to question period, because I really believe the public would love to see question period here every day.

I know that if we had question period, there would be some different kinds of articles written about this

government. There would be articles that would probably attack this government once again, because the questions we in the opposition ask are clearly not very nice to the government. Sometimes we are very unkind, and rightly so, because of the things they do. They're trying to avoid question period. Three days this week, no question period; one day last week, no question period—four days without question period. They are clearly afraid to face the opposition, or to face someone. You would think they want to get on with the business of this House and immediately get into question period.

We say the ruling of the Speaker is unquestioned. We rarely, if ever, question the Speaker's judgment. And if we do, we don't do it in this House. We might disagree, but in this House we never say publicly to the Speaker, "You're wrong." We never do that. And while we might question the decision of the Speaker, if we do so, it's not in this place. But each and every one of the members who stood up last Thursday attacked the Speaker. They were so angry at Gary. They were so angry that one of their own would make a ruling that would contradict what they were doing outside this place.

I say that when the Speaker makes a ruling—at least to make a ruling that the current Speaker made, that he felt so strongly about the offence that was committed by this government, that the budget would be presented outside of this place, that a Speaker should feel so strongly and render the decision he made, tells the government members how strongly the Speaker feels about the contravention of conventions of this place.

The Tories don't like it. I presume they would expect one of their own never to rule against the government. They would want the Speaker to be quiet, even if he disagreed with what they were doing. They would want to silence him as they tried to do last week, although this week they've moved on. They've decided they ought not to be attacking the Speaker any more.

1730

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** No. O'Toole did that on Monday.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr O'Toole from Durham—true, that was Monday. Yes. Well, maybe after Monday they moved on. Quite right.

Thankfully they moved on to other issues, other than trying to attack the Speaker for the ruling. Rather than attacking the 35-year-old whiz kids they have in their offices for coming up with the great idea of democratizing this place by presenting democracy directly to the public and not to this Legislative Assembly, rather than attacking those highly paid young men and women who clearly made a serious error in deciding, "We have a novel idea; we're going to take democracy directly to the public," they attacked Gary Carr, the Speaker of this place. Go and attack the young people behind the Speaker's corner over there. Some of them say, "I surrender. It's not me." OK. But there are others. I am convinced the young people in the Premier's office thought, "Premier, we have an idea for you and we're going to sell it. Don't worry, it's going to go well."



It didn't go very well. The journalists, the editorials, the public and their own Tory members were attacking this government one after the other. I would have loved to have seen the whiz kids go, "Oh, Jeez, what did we do here?" I would have loved to see their faces. I'm sure Ernie Eves's face wasn't looking too pretty then—day after day, the attacks on him and his government for doing what they did. I wouldn't be paying these whiz kids the kind of dollars they're paying them to come up with bright ideas like that, which resulted in nothing more than two weeks of an assault on this government for assaulting the democratic conventions of this place—two weeks.

**Mr Sorbara:** I would be humiliated.  
**Mr Marchese:** You would be humiliated, Greg. You would probably say, "Sorry, we were wrong. We made a mistake. We'll come back. We'll present it to the Legislature."

**Mr Kormos:** What did Tom Jacobek say?  
**Mr Marchese:** About this?  
**Mr Sorbara:** Don't confuse him.  
**Mr Marchese:** That's a different story. It's a municipal issue really.

Greg Sorbara said he would have apologized. Many of us probably would have said immediately, as an act of contrition, "We made a mistake. We're human." Ernie Eves is human, he claims. If that were so, I would quickly abandon that terrain and just move on. The best way to neutralize your enemy is to say, "You're right. We made a mistake." It's true, you neutralize your enemies. When they attack you on a point, whether you're right or wrong, you have to say, "You're right." That's how you defang the enemy and move on.

But this government doesn't do that. Every time they get attacked, they feel they need to attack back, and more strongly. Ernie felt personally slighted by the Speaker. A couple of weeks ago when this debate was raging, he felt as if the Speaker ought not to have made the comments he made, which were that he felt the budget should have been in this place, read in this assembly and not outside of this place. He felt the Speaker should not have made that statement or other statements related to it. Gary was right; the Speaker was wrong.

**Ms Martel:** What? No, Gary was right. The Speaker was right.

**Mr Marchese:** Gary was right, the Speaker was right, the Premier was wrong. That's the way it goes. That's the way it works.

Now in the last couple of days all we are hearing are people attacking, making comments. I was just listening to John Baird, the minister of such and such—I don't know what—talking about free votes. I thought, OK, is he going to bring forth a motion that's going to deal with the issue of free votes? Maybe they are. He said, "Well, too many people have the ability or the strength or the power or the something or other to be able to vote according to the way they want." I say to John, are you bringing something forward? Because I don't see any of your members that often—if rarely—stand up to vote

against this government on anything. Not that I disagree with the idea, because I personally, in my own time in our government, felt that members should have the right to—

**Mr Kormos:** What standing order do you have to change to facilitate free votes? What law do you have to change? There is no law requiring change.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Whose debate is this, Peter?

The point is that free votes can be good for democracy in this place, and a lot of people are talking about it, I've got to tell you. I'm a supporter—

*Interjection.*  
**Mr Marchese:** I beg your pardon? So then the Liberals chime in. All right. Anyway, when people get to the other side, the government benches, they change. Isn't that true, Greg? They do. Then all of a sudden they forget about what they did in opposition. Mercifully, some of us have been there long enough for us to remember what we did—

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** In government.

**Mr Marchese:** —while we were in government to be able to say, "Please don't play the public in any way." They know that when the Liberals were in power, they made their own appointments of Liberals, when the Tories were in power, when the New Democrats were in power—

**Ms Churley:** We appointed Liberals and Tories.  
**Mr Marchese:** I know. We appointed a lot of Liberals and Tories. I don't know why we would do that.

**Mr Sorbara:** How many are there? There aren't enough.

**Mr Marchese:** I've got to tell you that's a bad one. John Baird talked about the idea of how nasty the NDP was in opposing some person—

**Ms Churley:** The new chair of the energy board.  
**Mr Marchese:** The chair of the energy board—and he said, "It wasn't nice; the NDP opposed it. The Liberals were nice" and they supported him. Of course he doesn't know because he wasn't here, but when we were in government they had sniff dogs at the door in I think room 228 or committee room 2 to smell any person who could be remotely connected to the NDP, and when they did, you had five or six media people lining up, saying, "We got 'em." That's the way it was. It was terrible.

We appointed so many Liberals and Tories because we wanted to be different. I say to myself these days, why did we do that?

**Mr Sorbara:** It was really stupid.  
**Mr Marchese:** I admit it was dumb. Instead of supporting your own supporters, we went out and supported the Liberals and Conservatives.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I just wanted to mention to one of the members who is turning away from me, I can't tell when you're talking or not, but I did want to say that I give a little bit of latitude to members of the speaker's caucus that I will not give to anyone else's caucus.

The Chair recognizes the member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr Sorbara:** I'm going to have to move over.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, come to order.

**Mr Marchese:** I defer to your judgment, Speaker, as always, and thank you for the intervention.

Greg, I've got to tell you it was not a very intelligent thing to have done, because then the Tories come and they say—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I'd like you to address the Chair with your comments. That will help me a little bit.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, please come to order.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Speaker, for your second intervention.

He's trying to derail me, I know, but he won't succeed.

When the Tories were in opposition they said, "Ah, we're going to appoint people solely on the basis of merit." It was the funniest thing, because I knew that once in power, "merit" meant Tory. That's what it meant.

**Ms Martel:** Tory membership.

**Mr Marchese:** Tory membership, that's what it's all about. They make no bones about that, because when you raise this issue they say, "Yes, you're right," because they all have merit, right?

**Ms Churley:** Donations help too.

**Mr Marchese:** Donations, are you kidding? These guys are so deep into the pockets of the Ontario—I was about to say some people—rich people. Yes.

This kind of debate is a free-for-all. I just heard Tony Ruprecht, the member for Davenport, have an opportunity to talk about the fact that this government is not going to be able to balance their budget and, Greg, you agree.

I worry, and let me tell you why I worry. If the Tories are unable to balance their budgets, I argue that Liberals will be unable to balance their budgets too. Let me explain why.

Liberals, at every meeting I go to, when asked, "How are you going to raise the money for your promises?" say, "We've got \$2.2 billion when we take back the corporate tax cut that they have made."

**Mr Caplan:** Actually, \$3.2 billion.

**Mr Marchese:** You guys say \$2.2 billion. Are you saying \$3.2 billion?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, now it's \$3.2 billion. They're adding. So they say \$3.2 billion—

**Interjection:** It went up.

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**Mr Marchese:** It keeps on going up, right. Here's the problemo you have, Liberals—

**Mr Sorbara:** Il problema.

**Mr Marchese:** We make fun, certo. The problem is that there is no \$2.2 billion or \$3.2 billion. Why, for those of you who are asking? Only \$700 million has been

spent thus far. At the completion of the corporate tax cuts, it would be \$2.2 billion, and now the Liberals are saying \$3.2 billion. But if there is an election next week, as I anticipate, all they've got is \$700 million that has been spent thus far. But in the Liberal mind they say, "Uh, uh, we've got \$3.2 billion." Then, they say—

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** I wouldn't talk about math if I were you, Rosario.

**Mr Marchese:** All I say to the public is, please ask the various accountants in the Liberal caucus to explain it to you in the event that I'm not doing a very good job of it. There are some accountants over there who say, "Rosario, I wouldn't talk if I were you." That's fine, but please hold them to account, especially the accountant, whose riding I don't remember. But say, "Tories, have you spent \$3.2 billion?" Because as people often tell you, you haven't; you've only spent \$700 million.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** Hold on, David. So you've got \$700 million and all the tax credits—

**Mr Caplan:** Whoa, Nellie.

**Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** Whoa, Nellie.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Don Valley East, come to order.

**Mr Marchese:** Sisters and brothers, take it easy. I'm here. I've got two more minutes.

Then you've got, they say, \$500 million more from the tax credit. They are going to take that back. The problemo is that they've only spent, we estimate, about \$50 million of that tax credit. At its completion it could be \$200 million, \$300 million, \$500 million, we say, but there's only \$50 million. If you add up the accountants' math and the Liberal caucus's math, they've got \$3.2 billion, plus \$500 million from the tax credit; they've got \$4 billion already for the \$7-billion promises they've made, and that's how they are going to balance the budget.

**Ms Martel:** A bit of a shortfall.

**Mr Marchese:** You follow my math, because I think it's simple. My math is simpler than the accountants' math; I don't know how they're going to add it up. But they say, "No new tax increases, \$7 billion or more in service increases, and we're going to balance the budget."

Mr Ruprecht and all the Liberals shouldn't play this game of attacking the Tories about not being able to balance the budget, because I've got to tell you, good listeners all, good citizens all who are watching this program, they won't be able to budget either—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Scarborough Centre, come to order.

**Mr Marchese:** —unless they increase taxes, which they are touchy about; decrease services, which, oh, that would hurt; and/or the third alternative, which would be to run a deficit by eliminating their bill that requires this assembly to have balanced budgets.



Good people who are watching, it's tough, I'm sure, to follow what we're all saying here. What we should be doing is getting on with the business of the House. What the government should do, what the members should do, is listen to Eves, who said, "We're not going to ever make the mistake of taking this budget out to Magna Corp." Listen to the guy. I think he learned his lesson. Admit you were wrong and move on; question period, move on. Have the election you so desperately want and let's get it out of the way.

Speaker, that's the way I see it; I suspect this is the way the electorate sees it. We should just be moving on.

**Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio):** I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on this important motion. I was very entertained for the last 20 minutes by the member for Trinity-Spadina. He's a very entertaining speaker indeed.

I was interested in his comments about merit. I don't think there's ever been a party in government that's been recognized more for doing what we said we were going to do. He didn't seem to bring that up, and that's been revolutionary in government. It's an honest reputation we ended up getting, and it's a fair one, because that's exactly what has been accomplished.

The other area that I was hearing him talk about was balancing the budget—who has and who hasn't. I think the proof is in the pudding as to what has happened. For four years the budget has been balanced. We started out with a tremendous debt in this province and a deficit of over \$11 billion. That's well over \$1 million an hour that was being spent, that wasn't coming in. No wonder it took a little while to get that economy turned around. It wasn't something that was going to be easy to do, we knew that, and it did take a year or two. But just imagine if we spent what the Liberals were asking us to spend. Just imagine if we had spent what the NDP were asking us to spend. The debt would have just gone right out of sight and the deficit would have been even higher. They complain now that, yes, there was a bit of an increase in the debt after we took office, for the first two or three years, but at the same time they were also pleading for more money to be spent. They were quite adamant that tax cuts wouldn't work. Even their friends in Ottawa—Paul Martin, for example—now know that tax cuts work.

What we're really debating here is a motion about a budget, but what happened in the spring that they want to refer to as a budget was a budget speech. It was a speech about the budget. The budget was tabled here at Queen's Park with the Clerk on that day, the same day the speech was delivered in that hall. That was a budget speech. It was a speech describing some of the contents of the budget. There is nothing in the rules of order that require that speech to be delivered in this Legislature. As a matter of fact, a motion has to be put forward so it can be delivered here. There is nothing that says it has to be delivered here. I do respect some people's concern that it wasn't delivered in this Legislature, in this Parliament—I follow that concern; I follow that thinking—but lo and

behold, what we were talking about and what we are talking about is a speech about the budget.

When it comes to legality, I heard a member on the other side of the House speaking the other day about spending all this money outside of the Legislature. Well, that is not exactly what's going on, because a speech about the budget isn't spending money, it's just describing what's in it. The actual spending is when those budget bills come forward and they're voted on. When we vote on the budget itself, it's really voting on a principle, sort of like voting on the throne speech after there has been debate on it. Lo and behold, I think what we should be debating here right now is a budget that has been tabled properly in this Legislature with the Clerk. That's the kind of debate that should be going on, rather than holding up the process by debating process. This has gone on; this is now day four in this debate.

Yesterday they brought up special warrants and, "Isn't that awful?" There was a requirement to carry out interim supply, which had been voted on for some six months and was running out on April 30. It was necessary to have a special warrant when there wasn't an interim supply vote in the House. Consequently, approximately a little under 50% of the budget was voted on, so we could continue to pay for expenses such as our medical system, which needs dollars. Also, it was paying for things like SARS, a medical emergency that was very important to be looked after. I look back to 1995, when I heard the Minister of Energy make the comment that at that time the special warrant was for 60% of the budget. I think what was brought forward yesterday was very unfair, and what ended up appearing in the popular media was rather misleading.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Galt:** If you want to catcall, you should at least be in your own seat; it makes you easier to recognize.

We talked about the democratic process and I observed the Liberals, both federally and provincially, appointing people for nominations. They won't even allow the democratic process to occur in all of their ridings. I think that's such a shame. It never happens with the PC Party, whether it's federal or provincial. They go through the normal nomination process—the selling of the memberships—which is quite competitive. That's democracy. It isn't one vote from the leader appointing somebody to be the nominee in a certain riding. That's just disgraceful to the whole process.

1750

I think what we really should be debating here this afternoon, and should have been for the last few days, are some of the things that are in the budget that are going to help the farmers and the people in rural Ontario, particularly in my riding of Northumberland. There were some really good items, and I know that our Minister of Agriculture lobbied very hard so that some of these items would be in that budget. I also have lobbied for many of these over the past few years; for example, exempting the land transfer tax when farms are being transferred within

and between family members. These farms have become large and, consequently, a large land base with a lot of buildings, and that land transfer tax can get to be pretty expensive, when in fact the farm is staying within the family. That's really no time for governments to be taking advantage of farmers in rural Ontario. There's an item; I think we should be getting on and debating and getting that one sorted out for our farmers in rural Ontario.

I'm also rather excited about an item in the budget about extending the Ontario wine strategy. Very close to my riding, the county of Prince Edward is really blossoming in the wine industry, and it's certainly a very successful start. It's doing very well. This wine strategy is going to be extended for another five years, some \$10 million. This is an item that is pretty important to the economy of Prince Edward county, as well as the Niagara Peninsula. I think this is another item that we should get on with and debate and get into place.

Also suggested in the budget was the cutting of the capital tax rates and a 100% reduction in the corporate income tax for alternative fuels. This brings it back to farmers with the production of corn for ethanol, and also the production of biodiesel, especially from soybeans and the soy oil that can be used for that purpose. It's a great boon for the farmers of this province, for the farmers in my riding, to be able to produce grains that can be used both for ethanol as well as biodiesel. These are the kinds of things that are important to them, not the procedures in this Legislature. I'm quite anxious to get on with that and see that this kind of corporate tax is reduced and removed from those particular productions.

Also, there is \$1 million per year for the next five years to assist with food safety, particularly as it relates to education and training. I think everyone in this House is empathetic to that concern. We all enjoy food, some of us maybe a little more than others, and certainly we've heard about the concerns about water. There's no question that our food and the safety of that food is every bit as important.

Something that I've lobbied on for some time—and I think you, in your riding, Mr Speaker, have a similar concern—is the identification card that farmers could use to exempt them from the retail sales tax. It's very inconvenient to have to pay it, keep all the bills and then submit them periodically to recover that retail sales tax, when in fact they could have it removed right at source. It's something that the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture has commented on to me at different times. I've sent letters to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, as well as the Minister of Finance, encouraging this very thing to happen; and lo and behold, it's in the budget. It could happen; it's just a matter of getting on with it in this House. But, instead, the loyal opposition is insisting that we debate process.

It's so frustrating that we're hung up in this process and can't get on with making things happen in the budget, and getting the votes on the various budget bills that would make some of these things legal.

For example, in the budget there is also talk about assistance for nutrient management. Once that act went through, some farmers had a lot of difficulty in being able to afford the costs that go with nutrient management.

One thing that has really caught the attention of seniors in that budget is the Ontario home property tax relief, giving them relief from education tax. I've heard for so long in rural Ontario from seniors, "Why do we have to continue to pay education tax on our homes?" Well, we have taken a big step in trying to look after that with the change and capping the education tax in Ontario, and now it's being reduced significantly. Now we have an opportunity for our seniors to be totally exempt from that education tax, and we had heard for so long from our municipal councillors, frustrated over the spiralling education tax in Ontario. Here is an opportunity so that our seniors won't have to pay for any of it.

In that budget was a commitment for several million dollars to assist with the funding of rural schools and small schools. Some 70 or 80 schools are being closed across Ontario on an annual basis, and this has been going on for the last three or four decades. Certainly it's very distressing to communities. As a matter of fact, there has been quite a debate in Port Hope over this very issue. Here's money that's suggested in the budget. We should get on with debating it and get it in place so that our small schools in Ontario are properly funded.

I see the opportunity in the budget for more money for nurse practitioners. With the shortage of physicians in rural Ontario, there is no question that these nurse practitioners can carry out an awful lot of the routine jobs, the routine services that are required in rural Ontario. Also there is new money for emergency firefighting equipment in some of our small communities.

Excellence in education was brought out on several occasions in that budget, and I just want to make a comment on a few of those. Some 135,000 new post-secondary student places: this is the largest capital investment ever in Ontario and the most significant since the 1960s, when there was a significant expansion in our post-secondary schools, our universities and our colleges. There has been a lot of concern about what's going to happen with our double cohort and if there will be enough space for them. This is going to ensure that there will indeed be enough spaces for that very thing.

It's mentioned in there also that we'll allow athletes, musicians, artists and people who are highly skilled to be able to go into our schools and work and function as expert instructors and volunteers.

There's also a suggestion there that parents will have more choice in where their children will be enrolled. This is a chance to enrol your young person, your student, any place within your school board rather than in your neighbourhood if you don't particularly agree with that school—or with that particular teacher—that your young person, your student, your child is attending.

All in all, there is a tremendous number of things in that budget that we should get on with and debate and get in place rather than being here debating process.



I see the clock is just about 6. Maybe we'll wind up and continue tomorrow at 1:30.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Because of the unusual circumstance we currently find ourselves in, before adjourning today I would like to advise members of the procedures for tomorrow morning's meeting of the House.

Our standing orders are very clear in providing that the only reason this place should meet before 1:30 of the clock on a Thursday is to deal with private members' public business. Tomorrow, of course, happens to be such a day when the House will begin meeting at 10 am.

Therefore, from 10 o'clock until noon tomorrow the House will meet to deal with private members' ballot

items 5 and 6, standing in the names of Ms Churley and Mr Gilchrist. Then at 1:30 of the clock, when we come back to this place, we will immediately go into the debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr Conway as it sits today, with the member for Northumberland properly having the floor at 1:30.

Please note that this is based on the process the House followed on January 22 and 23, 1997, in identical circumstances.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
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Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	<b>Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony</b> (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	<b>Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen</b> (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	Lanark-Carleton	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Don Valley West / -Ouest	<b>Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Erie-Lincoln	<b>Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim</b> (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	<b>Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda</b> (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		



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Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	<b>Baird, Hon / L'hon John R.</b> (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	<b>Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long- Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	<b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	<b>Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
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Oshawa	<b>Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J.</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
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Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	<b>Young, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 15 May 2003

Jeudi 15 mai 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 15 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 15 mai 2003

*The House met at 1000.  
Prayers.*

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### ADOPTION DISCLOSURE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

Ms Churley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of adoption disclosure / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne la divulgation de renseignements sur les adoptions.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** According to order 96, the member has 10 minutes to make her presentation.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Good morning to everybody who has joined me for this occasion. This bill is not new to anybody in this chamber. This is the fourth time we've debated such legislation since 1999. I don't know if I've made a record yet, Mr Speaker, of the same bill being presented so many times in this Legislature without its being passed.

Each bill received overwhelming support. In 2000, Bill 77 was sent to committee and was reported back to the House for third reading and a final vote, and that never happened because the government blocked it from happening even though at the end of the last session there were several private members' bills from all three parties—I think we only got one, if any, but both Liberals and Tories. Many, many bills were passed.

This bill was not allowed to go through by the government because there are a few members, and I say only a few members, in the chamber who do not support going forward with adoption disclosure reform. This is a government that's in the process of bringing forward changes to the Legislative Assembly Act so that private members have more of a say in this place, and in fact is proposing that if a private bill gets I think up to 75% of

support from all members of the House, then the bill should be granted third reading. I can guarantee you that I have that 75% or more support in this chamber, and yet the government refuses to let it go forward for third reading.

That does not bode well in terms of Margaret Marland and other members—Michael Prue was on that committee; I had been on it for a while—trying to change things so that there is actually more democracy in this place when there is overwhelming support for a private member's bill.

I did want to point out that some of the people who have been working hard on adoption disclosure reform are here with us today. I think others are joining us. We have Tina Kelly, who is from my riding and she's a birth mother; her friend Gladys Pulp. Holly Kramer is going to be coming—she's with Parent Finders—and her partner, Brian MacDonald, who have long been active on this issue. As you know, it was Holly Kramer, the president of Parent Finders, who helped me find my son several years ago because I was not able to do it through the existing legislation. Nancy McGee, a birth mother, is here; Wendy Rowney, an adoptee, is here from the Coalition for Open Adoption Records; Graig Scott is here; Jeffery Telford, who is an adoptee, and his wife, Mari Justo; and Shifra Saltzman from the Canadian Council of Natural Mothers. Also sitting in the gallery is my legislative assistant, Christine Kemp, who has been enormously helpful to me over the past few years as we try to get this very important legislation passed.

Since we last discussed this bill in this Legislature, Alberta has now brought in legislation similar to mine. It's not exactly the same—none of the legislation is exactly the same—but they're all going in the same direction, and that is, opening up records to adult adoptees and their birth parents. Newfoundland just proclaimed their adoption disclosure reform; they just proclaimed the bill. We're getting further and further behind. Ontario used to be a trend-setter in social policy and now we're falling further and further behind other provinces. We have British Columbia, Newfoundland and Alberta just bringing in new legislation.

I'm going to remind you of some other jurisdictions across the world—we are not re-inventing the wheel here. Tony Martin is here. He worked hard on this issue as well and introduced a bill. I want people to listen carefully to this: in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Israel, Argentina, Mexico, several US states, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Austria, Germany, France, New Zealand, Australia, British Col-

umbia, Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, adoptees can approach their respective birth registries and obtain identifying birth information. We are still lagging behind here.

I want to remind the members who are present once again what this bill is all about. I've had suggestions put to me. In fact, I was invited to a meeting yesterday with Mr Wettlaufer and I believe he got the Minister of Community and Social Services to come along. I appreciate what he's trying to do; he's trying to find some middle ground here to get the bill passed. But unfortunately what became very clear early on in the meeting was that there was a lack of understanding about what this bill is all about, which is somewhat astounding after all the years this has been before us.

It was put to me that if I would agree to an amendment to not allow retroactivity, then there could be support for the bill. What I pointed out, and I'll point out again, is that that is what this bill is all about. That is the bill. You can't amend it, because the bill is there to provide relief to all those birth parents and adoptees, who are now adults, who were adopted at a time of absolute shame and secrecy around the adoption process. Birth mothers were told, I was told, "Don't worry. You'll have your baby and you will go away and forget all about it." That doesn't happen. I presume most of you have children, some grandchildren, like myself. My daughter has a little boy and I was there to witness the birth of that baby. I'm a proud grandma. I have two stepgrandchildren as well whom I absolutely adore. But those of you who have had children, those of you who are lucky enough to be in the birth room and see your child delivered into this world, will agree with me that there is no experience like it in this world. The magic of bringing a child into the world is something that cannot be described.

For me, carrying my child for nine months as a teenager, in secrecy, giving that child up for adoption, and every day of my life not forgetting him, and finally finding him, is indescribable. I talk to so many birth mothers and so many adoptees who are living their lives trying to put the two back together again. That's what this is all about, being able to heal the wounds and correct a terrible wrong that was done to people at a time—it was happening across the world—when pregnancy out of wedlock was a shameful thing, in some cases worse than death.

1010

I want to point out to people that if you misunderstand and if we change this bill so it's not retroactive, it won't do what it's supposed to be doing. The reality today is that most adoptions are open. It is the past we're trying to fix here.

There are two things that are cited to me now as reasons why the government cannot move forward. One of them is absolutely shocking. After September 11, when the government brought in new regulations around being able to obtain a birth certificate, adoptees who were looking and searching received a letter from the now minister—it was cited in the committee hearings we

held—that because of what happened on September 11 and new security laws, it would interfere with the security around birth certificates. In the US, where this happened, none of the states that have open adoption records are citing that as a reason not to give adult adoptees and their birth parents their birth information from years ago. So why would we be doing it here? It's absurd and an insult to that community to say that if they are given their original birth information, it might breach security. That's shocking. Let's dismiss that one. I think we would all agree that is utterly absurd.

Second, some government members now cite—I know that Mr Eves, the Premier, who I think quite sincerely is sympathetic to this bill and wanted to help facilitate it, heard at the 11th hour, when we were trying to pass it in the last session, that the privacy commissioner had some concerns. This was not news. It was I who went to her, even though she said categorically that she does not have jurisdiction in this area, that it doesn't fall within her framework. But she did give me an opinion. It's an opinion that's been cited in other jurisdictions I mentioned. That's their job, to talk about some of the privacy issues. Two things that she said are very important: that it was outside of her purview, but since I asked she gave me the information; more importantly she said that, nevertheless, she was sympathetic to the need for adoption disclosure reform to those who need it, and that at the end of the day, this is something the government—I am paraphrasing—must decide in terms of social policy, that sometimes governments have to decide on these things based on what's best for all the people.

I would ask people not to cite those reasons today for not supporting this bill.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** I really appreciate the seriousness of this matter in so far as the member from Toronto-Danforth is concerned. I am very sympathetic to what she is trying to do here. I sat in committee approximately 18 months ago when this came before committee, along with the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, who sat in on the committee. I know that he shares this sympathy.

I want to say that in my interpretation of the letter the member from Toronto-Danforth received from the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, she says that while she is sympathetic to the position, nevertheless she said—I am going to provide a direct quote here; I am not going to put an interpretation on the privacy commissioner's words, that "the ideal from a privacy perspective would be an 'opt in' approach, whereby the presumption is that individuals do not wish to be contacted unless they expressly state they desire such contact."

She also states that the previous Bill 77—this one of course is the same as the previous Bill 77—resembled the adoption disclosure process adopted in British Columbia and Newfoundland, whose "jurisdictions impose higher penalties for violating no-contact notices." She also states that Bill 77—it's now the same bill—affords an individual the "right to withdraw a contact veto, with no right to reinstate it."



Now, just a minute. In a free country, just because an individual withdraws a contact veto, should that person not have the right to reinstate it, if he or she so wishes, at some point in the future, whether it be a short time in the future or a long time in the future? She said, "In my view, the possibility of restoring a contact veto ... should also be considered. These are some privacy protective measures within the context of the current Bill 77 that we would recommend."

Again I say to you that this bill we're discussing or that the privacy commissioner is discussing is the same as Bill 77. She said that "my primary concern is the retroactive nature of the bill. I would recommend that you consider limiting the retroactivity of Bill 77 so that the legitimate privacy expectations of birth parents and adoptive adults are respected. As we discussed, some birth parents may have placed their children for adoption with the assurance that their identity would not be disclosed without their consent."

These are very serious concerns on the part of the privacy commissioner. My recollection is that in committee we asked some of the adopted adults if they did not understand that certain adoptive parents had concerns for privacy. While they accepted that, they nevertheless felt their own adopted concerns pre-empted those of the adoptive parents. I have, again, some sympathy for their position, their anxiousness in wanting to search out their parents, to search out any information from their parents that might affect their health, that they would like their health records. I agree. I think they should have their health records. But somehow I feel that retroactivity of privacy elimination is wrong. Thirty, 40, 50 years ago people were under different conceptions than they are today. I think we need to respect the concerns of those individuals who were under those conceptions at that time.

1020

The member for Toronto-Danforth mentioned that in our meeting yesterday she raised the fact that the Northwest Territories legislation was similar, that the British Columbia legislation was similar and that the Newfoundland legislation was similar. Understand, I say to you, Ms Churley, that Newfoundland's and British Columbia's are somewhat different in that they impose a very strict penalty for violation of a contact veto. Additionally, as I mentioned to you yesterday, I recall growing up and when I wanted something from my parents, I'd say, "Well, John has it," or, "Bill has it", or, "Bobby has it." They'd say, "If they go and jump off a cliff, are you going to follow them?" Two wrongs don't make a right. I know you heard that too, Speaker. I can see it by the smile on your face. It's a situation that I know you feel in your heart of hearts that you're doing the right thing. I don't believe you are. Because of that, I can't support the bill.

I mentioned to you that I would like to come forward with a bill personally that you could agree to, that would be a go-forward bill, that would change those portions of the present act that you find offensive, and go forward

from today or a year from today, so this won't happen in the future.

**Ms Churley:** It doesn't happen now.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Well, if it doesn't happen now, then why are you bringing this bill forward?

My point is, I would like to move forward from today. That is the whole concern that I have: the retroactivity of the lack of privacy. We as a government cannot say to those people who put their children up for adoption in previous years, "No matter what you sign, no matter what understanding you had before, we don't respect it any more." I think we need to say to those people: "In future, this is going to be the law. We go forward"—not the reversal of their anticipation of what the law would give them 20, 30 or 40 years ago.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** In my time here, this has really been the most difficult emotional issue that I've dealt with. I have trouble with the retroactive aspect, but I also quite understand that if it is not retroactive there is no point to the bill. Quite frankly, there is more good in the bill than there is bad.

But I have some concerns. As an adoptive parent—my sisters are adopted, our children are adopted, I've been a CAS board member for over 25 years, a foster friend for 16 years—I have some sense of the actual faces and people involved in the system.

In the children's aid society that I presently serve on, 25 years ago every mother who was giving up a child was read a statement indicating, among other things, that her name would never be disclosed. I think, quite frankly, if those people were asked now, most of them would opt to say, "You can waive it. I'm interested in the contact; I'm interested in being available." I suspect the large majority would be. But I have been contacted over the years by some who continue to perceive that it would present great, grave difficulties to them. They have never shared this with their family or with anyone else. So for them it's very important that their name not be given out because they were assured of that.

I might even add as an adoptive parent, when we adopted, we were assured that our name and our child's name would never be given to the birth mother. We were assured that. But there's no reference to an adoptive parent in here.

I'm not even sure of the legality of the name being given out without the person's consent. Surely we can't call any government office and ask anything.

Yet the bill has a lot of good in it, as I say. I do wonder whether there is a possibility for a year's period of time, through advertisements, allowing parents who believe that there was a commitment made to them, to opt out of this, and if they do not opt out, then they're in—whether there is a mechanism to protect those parents who very much do want that contact.

I know as a foster parent that not all people who are birth parents are good parents. There needs to be some caution about the contact. I'm talking about a small minority. But we have people in this world who do some horrible things to the children. Not all of them are given

up as babies; some are taken away from their birth parents for very strong reasons. So I have caution about making that contact. But I do question whether under the current legislation—I think it's good legislation—an individual's name can be freely given out.

I do wonder a little bit about the age of 19. I think of children that we've worked with. There are some individuals who are 19 years old physically but they're 14 years old mentally, or eight years old mentally, or developmentally handicapped. This bill doesn't address that.

The no-contact would probably work the majority of the time. But, as foster parents, on occasion we have had to have restraining orders issued against birth parents who come to our house and threaten us and the children. I know, through experience, that a piece of paper means exactly nothing if the individual is going to come. In some instances, there's a very real issue of safety involved in it.

In a sense, what we are creating in this is shared adoption. This is a relatively recent development, where an adoptive couple also stay in contact and work with the birth parent. But the adoptive parents enter into that arrangement willingly, the birth parent enters into it willingly, and the child, in most cases—probably all cases—benefits from this relationship. But this retroactively creates shared adoption that the adoptive parents have had no say in whatsoever. They are being legislated into something that they probably would have chosen not to be part of.

I'm an adoptive parent. Sometimes people use the expression "the real parents," and I can't tell you how much that hurts when someone says that. When I get up at 3 o'clock and walk the floor with the child, change the diapers, feed them and hopefully provide nurturing and encouragement, and they turn 19, don't tell me I'm not the real father and my wife's not the real mother. I have a struggle that we're going to be potentially entered into an arrangement that we chose not to. In fact, I see within this province couples who have said to me they've chosen to adopt foreign adoptions because it removes them from this pattern. Yet we have children in Ontario waiting for adoption—thousands and thousands of children.

If ever there was an issue I'm torn on, it's this one.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** Indeed I feel privileged to speak here today, however disappointed that, in fact, I have to. You have to understand, folks, that this piece of public business, this development of public policy, where some very fragile and at-risk people are concerned, started back in about 1975, and maybe even earlier than that. Of course, for all time people have been searching to find their families, roots, history and heritage, who it is that they are so that they can build a life on that and make decisions about that. Around 1975, this whole exercise began in earnest.

I remember my own part in it, in about 1994-95, when we actually had a bill before the House that had gone through very elaborate public consultations through committee. We had it before the Legislature. The last night

that we sat before we, as government, went before the people before Christmas—it was about a quarter to 12. I remember I put the bill on the table. I remember the passionate plea by Charles Beer—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Martin:** That's right. We rose just before Christmas, and we didn't go to the electorate until June. But that's not the issue here.

The issue here is that this bill was before the House on that evening at about quarter to 12. Charles Beer got up in the Legislature, on the Liberal side, and pleaded passionately, with everybody gathered—and the place was full—that if we could only move it to a vote, it would probably pass that evening, 127 to three. I would guess that there were probably about three members in the place—two of them Conservatives, and I believe there was one person in the Liberal caucus who had some concern with it, and was willing, I think, to even take a walk on it. But there would have been maybe two or three people, out of 127 duly elected members to this Legislature who would have voted in favour of that bill.

We would have been, at that time in 1994-95, leading the pack in the country in terms of legislation; we were on the cutting edge. Here we are, eight or nine years later, and we've fallen behind just a myriad of jurisdictions, both in Canada, the United States and around the world in terms of our legislation. I'm disappointed, deeply, that we're still considering this piece of public business that is, for me, very clearly a question of justice and human rights, rights that we who are not part of the adoptive community take for granted: you know, go get your birth certificate and talk to your family about some of the history there that will help you come to terms with a health issue or a decision you want to make about what you want to be etc. But people caught up in the adoptive community process, particularly adoptees themselves, find themselves shut off and cut off from that opportunity. I believe it's very clearly and simply an issue of human rights being denied.

1030

The two issues of concern with this bill raised by the members who have spoken so far I think are easily dealt with. As to the issue of privacy, this government found, in at least two other instances over the last couple of years where they've passed legislation, that even though there were issues of privacy, they didn't supersede what they felt in their heart was the need for government to move forward on certain fronts, and certainly this is another one. There are some questions about privacy, but I think other jurisdictions have dealt with them, and I believe the bill that our colleague Marilyn Churley is putting forward here today goes a long way to satisfying and dealing with those. We dealt with it eight or nine years ago and we were satisfied then. I remember sitting around the table with every member of that adoptive community—the adoptees themselves, the birth parents, adoptive parents—with some of them taking a deep breath, yes, in some instances, but agreeing that this needed to happen, that this piece of public policy needed



to change and this piece of public business needed to be done and we needed to be moving forward.

The other issue is the issue of retroactivity. If it wasn't so serious and such a blatant misunderstanding of what it is we're doing here, it would almost be funny. I mean, retroactivity? For God's sake, goodness gracious, this is what this is all about. I remember some of those people coming before the committee who were looking for their mother or father, or a mother or father looking for their child, and knowing they weren't going to be able to do that; or in some instances, they had found their child or their parents, but they had passed away so they weren't able to develop that relationship or get to know them. How many people, in the eight or nine years since, have lost all opportunity because the person they're looking for has indeed passed away since then? How long are we going to prolong this thing? How long are we going to keep this going so that continues to happen?

After great and respectful discussion back and forth and dialogue between everybody involved, we came up with what we thought would be a very good response to some of the concern about people who were afraid of being found, and that was the contact veto. That will work a lot better than what's out there now, where you have people finding each other through the use of private investigators and other organizations and no contact veto at all. The contact veto is actually an improvement on the reality at the moment and should give comfort to folks who have concern about being contacted when they don't want to be that there is this veto in place. It does work, because it has worked in other jurisdictions.

I would urge all members of this Legislature, after this long period of time—1975, 1994 and now 2003—to get with it, get with what's happening around the world. This is a human rights issue. Support the bill of our colleague from Toronto-Danforth here this morning.

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** There probably is no greater or more difficult issue that this House has ever faced. In terms of disparate viewpoints, they're very clear. I understand the intentions and I respect her desire to see the law changed. But there are other people out there who have rights and concerns also. They operated under a certain assumption many years ago that adoption records, birth records, would be sealed and wouldn't be opened unless both parties agreed to it. I have a letter from an Ontarian. I'm going to read it.

"My name is Margaret. I'm a senior citizen in my 70s. I have an objection to Bill 77"—now Bill 16. "I do not want adoption files open to the public or disclosed in any way except for a very serious medical condition which must be verified by a doctor.

"When I was 19 years old back in the 1940s, I was brutally raped and left beside the road. I was an innocent, even at 19 back then. I was so afraid and scared and had no one to talk to"—about the situation I was in. "There were no places to go"—back then. "I had to keep everything to myself. When I was almost five months pregnant, I finally found out I was going to have a baby. I wanted to die. I knew nothing about sex or getting pregnant. I was a virgin when this happened.

"Later ... I was pregnant when I passed out on the street and a police officer called an ambulance and took me to a hospital"—and a doctor told me what was about to happen.

"I had a baby"—it was a boy—"who I never saw, never held and did not want to. I do not know who he is" because of the situation.

"Before I left the home, the government workers and social worker told me ... that I had gone through this terrible ordeal." I was guaranteed that "the records would be sealed" and no one would ever know. "I truly believed them and even though I felt ashamed, dirty and used, I knew I must start"—my life—"over." I am married now and have a wonderful family. I've been married for 50 years, but one thing I did not ever "tell my husband was what happened to me when I was 19." Then she proceeds to explain why she wouldn't want the information ever released.

As legislators, we draft laws based on discussion and social policy. Historically in Canada, we draft laws with a view to protecting minorities. We draft laws based on democratic principles, but you always draft laws to protect individual rights. I understand what the member is trying to do. I suggested to Minister Elliott that she meet with the member and discuss the issues of retroactivity.

I have real concerns about any Parliament where we would change laws that would put the law in place retroactively to the past. Historically, Parliaments don't do that. Laws go forward; laws evolve. They go forward; they don't go back. For any person in this place to pass a law that would, in essence, remove the seal that was placed on a record by the government, a contract, an agreement that the records and information would never be released to the public; to remove that through a negative option where, if you don't take action, your information can be released to the public, is wrong.

I don't support the bill. If they want to go forward and not deal with it retroactively and evolve the law forward, wonderful. If they want to deal specifically with recommendations from the privacy commissioner that would provide the same rights to those people, wonderful. The privacy commissioner stated, "It is unclear whether the amendments will apply retroactively. Many birth parents may have given up their children for adoption with the assurance that their identity would not be disclosed without their consent. Many adopted adults and adoptive parents may also share this understanding. To change the law now, with retroactive effect, would be a departure from that expectation of confidentiality." That's what the privacy commissioner says.

The member would state that the privacy commissioner has no power or authority over this act, and it's true. But the law, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act itself mandates the privacy commissioner to provide advice and counsel to the government and members of the Legislative Assembly. We rely on her counsel. We rely on her advice. We can't simply dismiss her advice when we don't like her advice.



It's quite clear to me that the commissioner has a problem with this. I don't know what's going to happen here today. To the people who are supporting Ms Churley's bill, I can't predict what's going to happen today. This is private members' business. I can tell you how I'm going to vote simply because they would not deal with the issue of retroactivity. I will continue to oppose it until they deal with that matter.

I have to state that it is choice for members of the NDP caucus to take objection to the fact that a member in this place can object to something and somehow obstruct the bill from going forward. The NDP caucus over the years, in my experience of the last four years, has written the book on how to obstruct bills in the House from going forward. It is choice for them now to stand here and say, "How dare anyone take their democratic right as an elected member of this Legislature and use it in this House." I don't expect they'll understand my position, but I'm not changing it.

1040

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** Let me first of all say that this is a very difficult issue, and it affects people in a very personal way. I know that many disclosures in adoptive situations can be very stressful, and in many cases they can be very happy events as well. I can tell you that within my own family that's certainly what happened in a situation something similar to this not too long ago. It was a very positive thing that happened for everyone.

It's kind of interesting hearing the concerns of the privacy commissioner. It's interesting because it's exactly as the minister says: the privacy commissioner gives advice to this body, and then we act on that one way or another. I can think of many situations when the privacy commissioner has given advice to this government and they acted regardless: POSO, Bill 26—and I really don't want to get involved in that debate. I don't even want to debate the issue here so much as the matter as it relates to private members' business.

We're getting close to an election, and all parties are basically saying there should be more power given to private members. My issue here today is that this member has brought this bill forward on four different occasions. On at least two or three of those occasions, it was given second reading, it went to committee, received unanimous or near-unanimous endorsement from the committee, and only one other thing has to happen before it becomes law, and that is for it to be called in this House and given third reading and then be given royal assent by the Lieutenant Governor, which is, in most cases, a fait accompli at that stage.

What I cannot understand is, why don't we let the majority of the House decide whether or not this bill is a good bill or a bad bill? It has been given second reading on at least two or three occasions; it has gone to committee. With my own bill, the audit bill, by the way, exactly the same thing happened: it was also endorsed by this House unanimously, it was also endorsed at committee unanimously. It happened exactly the same way. It

hasn't been given third reading because the government refuses to call it, which basically puts a lie to the whole notion that private members have rights to see their ideas, which the vast majority if not the unanimity of this House supports—and for some reason it isn't being brought forward.

I understand your concerns, and they may very well be legitimate, but there comes a time when we as legislators have to take a position on it. For someone, or a group of individuals on the government side who are a vast minority, to determine that we are not going to bring this forward and let the will of the people as exhibited through all of us here somehow deal with this issue is anti-democratic. I don't care whether I sit on that side of the House or on this side of the House, I would feel exactly the same way. Your concerns are legitimate, and there may very well be some good reasons to vote against this bill, but let us at least give 103 of us in this House—this is a private member's bill. No major government initiative or funding is involved. This is not a matter of confidence in the government; this is a matter of a private member's bill that has been given second reading in this House, that has been endorsed by committee after public hearings and after amendments to that particular bill etc. So why don't we just pass it and then call it for third reading? Isn't that what we as private, individual members want to happen? Isn't that what our party platforms basically say we all want to do? The problem, when it comes right down to it, is that the power structure in this organization, namely the government House leader or whoever calls the shots on that side, doesn't allow it happen. And this isn't the only bill that's happening to.

I'm not for a moment disputing the seriousness of this bill. I fully support the bill. I truly, fully support the bill because I think it will have a positive influence on public policy in this province. But I also recognize the fact that there may very well be individuals who, for very good reasons, want to vote against it. Let's give the members in this House the opportunity to do that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Frontenac-Lennox-Addington and—there's one more, but I've forgotten it.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** Hastings.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I shouldn't forget Hastings.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I know it's a riding with a long name and one that's hard to remember: Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, a beautiful, beautiful part of Ontario.

I stand this morning in the Legislature to speak in support of Bill 16. I spoke to Bill 77, its predecessor. This bill has been amended from Bill 77, I think amended in a very positive way. I don't have a lot of time this morning, but there are a few points I want to make around my support.

I did attend the committee hearings for Bill 77. There were 33 written and oral presentations to the committee, and all were in favour of the bill. I will always remember



some of the very poignant presentations made at those hearings.

The bill has been amended in a positive way, I believe, in what the member has added with respect to the no-contact part of the bill. What has been added is that if people break that no-contact order, there is a penalty of up to \$10,000 in a fine, if someone were to disregard the wishes of either the adopted child or the birth parent. I think that is a significant consideration. I believe the honourable member listened to some of the concerns in the debate that took place around Bill 77, very valid concerns brought forward on this issue, and has amended her bill in this way to provide not only a provision within the bill but also a penalty. That isn't the case in all other jurisdictions where similar legislation is in place, but the member has recognized, by points that were made in this Legislature and ones that have been received, that this is perhaps something that should be enacted.

I think it's also important to note that the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and the Adoption Council of Ontario support this bill. These are people who are in the business of dealing with family situations where children are surrendered, for whatever reason, to new families.

I also want to address some of the points that have been made that there may be people in the province who have some problem with the bill. My colleague Mr Gerretsen has indicated that while the vast majority of people who would be connected to this sort of issue would be in favour of it, there may be those who would not be. I would like to quote from the presentation that Dr Grand made to the committee, because I think his points are very valid. "Good policy should not be based upon opinion or casual observation. Nor should policy be determined by single-case examples. It is impossible to write a law that will cover every instance. If we were to be held to this standard, we would not allow anyone to drive a car for fear of a single accident."

We should not engage in business for fear of a fraudulent transaction. I'm sure you see the ludicrousness of taking the extreme position. Law must be written in a manner that attempts to do the most good in the circumstances, while at the same time attempting to limit the possible harm. Will there be a case where this law may not have a positive outcome? Perhaps so, but I am convinced from the submissions I've heard, from the dozens, probably hundreds, of contacts I've received from people across the province in support of this bill, that by supporting this bill and making it the law in the province the good of the majority will be served. For that reason, I will be supporting this bill.

1050

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Churley:** I just want to clarify once again what this bill does, because there are still some really clear misunderstandings about what it does. First of all, birth mothers did not sign a contract about never being able to hear from or see their children again. Of course, the baby had no rights to say anything whatsoever. We're talking

about them, as adults, being able to have the same rights as other adults in this province.

I want to say very clearly to the minister who read a letter from a woman who was concerned about this legislation that, first of all, there are misunderstandings. He thinks we're talking about information being released to the public here. Let's clarify that. The way it would work is you could put in a contact veto. In fact right now, if this woman's son wanted to find her through other means and found her, he could show up at her door now and knock on it. There's nothing stopping that. I could have done that when I found my son through Holly Kramer. I didn't do it. Neither did he. We went through a process of getting to know each other through various means. She does not have that opportunity now. Under this bill, she would. She would have more protection under this bill than she does at this moment. She could send in a contact veto.

Part of the bill, as is being done now in Newfoundland and Alberta and other jurisdictions, is not bringing the act into force until after a year of its proclamation so that the education can be done and the information given to all parties who might be involved.

So for people to stand up and say we're actually taking away people's privacy, it's not released to the public; it's only released to those birth parents and adult adoptees, and only if they have not filed a contact veto. So you must understand that within the existing law, as we find each other, though it doesn't happen, there's nothing to stop us from making that phone call or knocking on that door. This is a controversial issue within the adoption community. Some believe that what's happening now is against their human rights. I support that contention and say there shouldn't even be a contact veto. There are jurisdictions that brought in legislation years ago that are now re-examining the need to have it in there at all. There aren't any abuses.

I also want to point out that adoption disclosure—I mentioned it before but it's important to say again—was exempted from the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in 1987, and the privacy commissioner pointed that out when I asked what her views were, as other privacy commissioners gave similar views and Legislatures decided to act in the best public interest. I find it pretty rich to have members from the government side talking about having to obey the word of the privacy commissioner when I have before me and remember the Ontario provincial savings account issue. I think contempt was cited over the way the government went out and invaded the privacy of people who had investments and accounts in that bank. There's also the issue—there are several, but I'll cite a couple—of the commissioner coming out publicly, being very disappointed that the government hadn't acted on its promise to bring in privacy legislation to protect people from abuses within the health care system. That hasn't been done. I could go on and on. Those are not exempted from the privacy commissioner. These are things that the government should be doing.

So let's just be clear on that. I asked because I wanted to know. I read other privacy commissioners' reports from other jurisdictions and those were the kinds of thing that were cited there, but legislators went ahead anyway in the best interests of the public.

Let's remember here that information is not released to the public, there are contact vetoes and no contract was made with us, the birth mothers, when we gave up our children. Most women were never promised confidentiality and never wanted it; we spend our entire lives, in fact, trying to find our children. But those who do can put in a contact veto, which they cannot do now.

I want to talk about a couple of other things that are pretty critical to the discussion we're having today, and that is health care issues. The government, the Minister of Health, announced on January 6 a \$1.2-million investment in genetic testing for ovarian and breast cancer. Many thousands of women in Ontario will receive no benefit from this well-intentioned screening process, and that's because they're adoptees. I know a woman, Kariann Ford, who came before the committee and talked about her terrible disease, which she's passed on to her children, and it's a very, very terrible disease. She could have made decisions about not having children and she could have taken care of herself years ago had she known that this genetic disease was in her family.

I have a letter here—I'm trying to find it—from a woman who talks about her situation. Here it is. She says, "I found my birth family almost three years ago now, but unfortunately, my birth mother had passed away in 1972 from ovarian cancer. Because of this information, I went to my doctor, and the end result is that I had my ovaries removed because of precancerous tumours on each ovary. I was told if I hadn't discovered this then, within two years I would have had untreatable cancer of the ovaries. I had been searching for almost 30 years, have always had problems with ovarian cysts, but not one doctor ever suggested removing my ovaries or doing any further tests. I guess I owe my life to luck. My timing was perfect. Please, somehow, get the records open. It is vital to our health and lives."

We have full support from the chief of genetics, Dr Philip Wyatt, from a hospital here in Ontario, who talks about the number—thousands now—of genetic diseases we're aware of that are passed down biologically. So we're literally talking about saving lives here. I believe this is a human right. If there's a program in place to save lives, then it should be there for everybody.

The other fact I want to point out is that a major study was done on Canadians' view of opening up adoption records to the parties involved—the adult adoptee and the birth parent—and 75% of Canadians support doing so now. Again, the minister said I have no right, just because I or the NDP support a piece of legislation, to try to push it forward here. We're simply asking for a vote. That's what democracy is all about. He can vote against it, if he so chooses. But let the majority in this Legislature decide.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The mover of the motion has two minutes to reply.

**Ms Churley:** I have another letter from a woman who is the president of an organization that works with children with fetal alcohol syndrome. She talks about these families who have adopted children who have this disease, and they feel it is important for these children to have access to their records. They want to work with me to get this through. These parents adopt children who sometimes have this and, again, it's too late by the time they find out to do some early treatment.

What this bill is all about—and I say it again. As has been pointed out, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies overwhelmingly support this bill. They came and spoke to the committee. It says they "support the underlying philosophy behind Bill 77 and we are of the view that the time is right to bring about greater openness in the adoption disclosure process. It would indeed be unfortunate for this bill to fail to be enacted, after all of the adoption disclosure bills that have come before the Legislature in recent years." Why have they taken that position? Because they see the harm done, the overwhelming harm done to people, both the adult adoptees and the birth parents, and recognize that what we did many years ago was wrong-headed. England, the British Parliament, changed their laws in the 1970s, and I've read all of the other jurisdictions that have done so. I'm asking the members again today to not put, perhaps, personal concerns or fears into this, which is not being stated here. But I have to tell you that I'm concerned that some people seem to have some personal concerns and fears around retroactivity. We are legislators. Let's put that aside and vote on this bill today.

1100

ORGAN OR TISSUE DONATION  
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003  
LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT  
DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT  
AU DON D'ORGANES OU DE TISSU

Mr Gilchrist moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to amend various acts with respect to organ or tissue donation on death / Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait au don d'organes ou de tissu au moment du décès.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** It's indeed a privilege to stand here this morning and talk about a bill that deals with a subject not unlike the one Ms Churley has just dealt with. Let me say what an honour it is for me to champion a change in an important piece of legislation, a change that I think all members in this House will agree is in no way partisan. This isn't health spending or public-private partnerships or Hydro we're talking about here; we're talking about literally giving people a chance to improve the quality of their lives, in fact giving them a second chance at life itself.



Rarely have I had an opportunity to stand in this House and talk about a piece of legislation that has touched me and my family as personally as the concept of organ donation has. With me, in the gallery here today, is my sister Patti Gilchrist. My sister had a heart transplant just over a year ago. I want to tell you that I cannot say enough, I cannot give enough thanks to the team at Toronto hospital under Dr Vivek Rao and my sister's cardiologist Dr Peter McLaughlin and Dr Heather Ross and the literally dozens of other doctors, technicians, paramedics and police who were involved in the most extraordinary, the most coordinated, the most incredible operation that I can ever imagine.

We are talking about a situation where unfortunately somewhere in the province of Ontario, as a result of a car crash, a young man lost his life. But he had had the vision, he had had the courage, he had had the compassion to sign an organ donation card. In doing so, he started a process, a chain reaction after he was pronounced dead. The coordination that followed was breathtaking: a helicopter dispatched to get the heart, the police dispatched to ensure that the phone call to my sister went through, then an offer to drive her all the way from Cobourg down to the hospital in downtown Toronto. Meanwhile, by the time she got to the hospital, over a dozen doctors and senior nurses were already arrayed, starting to prepare for the tests that would determine whether my sister was going to be an eligible recipient. The tests then followed. Within four hours of her arriving at the hospital, the entire team was assembled. My sister had what little chance she would ever have to psyche herself up for what has to be considered just about the most traumatic operation you could ever imagine. Meanwhile the good folks at the Toronto hospital had all of their ducks in a row. In an extraordinary demonstration of medical competence and high technology, three hours later she emerged from an operating room and six weeks after that she emerged from the rehabilitation hospital, and aside from routine checkups she has never been back.

On behalf of all of the organ recipients out there, thank you for coming in today and demonstrating exactly what this bill is all about. Thanks to the foresight of that individual who allowed his heart to be transplanted, my sister is alive, and quite frankly she is healthier today than any time in the last 10 or 12 years. She could not walk up three stairs without being completely winded the day before that operation, and now she is as healthy as if she were much younger than she is today. I cannot say enough thanks.

That is, in part, what inspired me to look at the ways that we could go even further in terms of improving access to organ donation. There is no doubt that every year there are literally hundreds of compassionate Ontarians who have identified their willingness to be part of this whole process. The province in turn set up an agency to oversee organ donations in this province called the Trillium Gift of Life Network. It has been amply funded; again, dollars aren't the issue before us here today.

They've done an extraordinary job of raising awareness of the importance of organ donation.

I see one of my colleagues has distributed one of the brochures that the Trillium Gift of Life Network circulates. In addition, I brought along the pin that was produced for the National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week back on April 21-28. Through various means, in coordination with hospitals all across Ontario, the Trillium Gift of Life Network has done an excellent job, given the restraints that the current legislation puts on them.

There are two areas that I thought needed to be addressed; two areas where it was clear that—perhaps with the best of intentions at the time, the bill was first drafted under the heading of “Let's Walk Before We Run”—there were decisions made that have reduced access to organs, which Bill 17 hopes to address.

The first area is that the process for informing the world around you, particularly the medical specialists who will be the most relevant people dealing with this subject, is to fill out an application form that comes when you receive your driver's licence. This form is then followed up with a piece of paper, and you can carry around in your wallet an organ donation card.

The problem that has emerged is that if you didn't notice the form or if you forgot about it after receiving it or if you don't happen to have this piece of paper with you at the time a tragedy occurs, there is no way for that medical specialist to know that you have generously offered your organs for possible donation.

The bill that is before us here today proposes to change that process, so that when someone fills out the application form for their renewed or new driver's licence and when they fill out an application form for their health card, they will be required to answer the question. This isn't negative-option billing; there is absolutely no pressure, no expectation, but there is no avoiding simply saying yes or no. If you say yes, instead of a separate piece of paper, it will be embossed right on the health card and/or the driver's licence—far less likely not to be on your person in this day and age.

#### 1110

There's one other area that I thought needed improvement. Having made that very generous offer—the gentleman whose heart ultimately was transplanted into my sister—the ironic situation is that anyone else in his surviving family would have had the ability at the hospital to contradict, to countermand, that decision. I'm troubled by that, and I hope the members of all parties are similarly troubled, because surely there is no decision more personal and more worthy of respect by others than the decision to offer up a part of yourself so that others can have a second chance at life.

This bill would replace the current protocol by saying, “Whatever your final decision has been—if you have said ‘yes’ when you last filled out either your health card or the driver's licence, and if you have not changed your mind since then and asked for it to be updated—that will be considered the final and binding consent for dona-



tion.” Surely we must offer people at least that comfort, to know that if you’ve made that generous offer in your mind and, in fact, on that form, there is no chance that someone else will subvert your interests; no chance that someone will stand in the way of you making that extraordinarily generous gift. That’s what this bill does. I commend all the members to its merits.

I thank you on behalf of my sister and the 1,600 people who are waiting for transplants in Ontario today, in some cases on a waiting list that would stretch six years, in the case of kidney donations. I commend this bill to you, and I look forward to your support when it’s put for a vote later this morning.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** I commend the honourable member for bringing this bill forward today because it is something that we do need to think about as a society. As it stands right now in the province of Ontario, as of March 24, there were 1,781 people awaiting some sort of organ transplant. In London alone, on the waiting list at the London Health Sciences Centre there were over 303 individuals. Unfortunately, though, 23 people will die each year in the London area while waiting for an organ donation.

I think what we need to recognize is that, as an individual who makes that choice to donate his or her organs, that one individual can help nine other lives. I think that’s something we need to be extremely conscious of. I think, as well, we need to recognize that not only is it going to potentially help nine other individuals, but it can offer some comfort to a grieving family, knowing that those organs are going to help somebody else live a fulfilling life.

Do we need to do more, as the members said and brought forward with this bill today? Yes, we do. If you have a health card today, the new health card, it says on the back that you’re a donor. But if you’re somebody like myself who has the old health card, there’s no indication whether I would approve to be a donor or not. There’s nothing on the driver’s licence at all that indicates that you wish to be a donor. I would hope that, as this legislation moves forward, where it says on the back of the new health cards that you’re a donor, we could put something in place to have that same indication given on the back of a driver’s licence.

Of course, we can all fill out the forms, and it’s important that we do that. But I think we need to recognize, as well, as the member has pointed out, that we need to ensure that our families are aware of our intentions. With the new cards, not only would you be filling out your own donor card; there’s a recognition and a card that would be filled out by your family member to make sure that they understand your wishes.

We need to do everything that we can. I’m pleased to hear that the province has created a transplantation advisory committee. This is a new committee, and it’s a committee that, I think, can play an important role in the future. We saw what happened in London with a number of programs that were being scoped out. We saw, fortunately, a change of position as far as the cardiac pro-

gram is concerned. But I know that there are efforts underway in London right now to establish a kidney-pancreas program. There’s only one program in the province right now, and it’s at Toronto General Hospital. I know that the advisory committee is looking at the London program because the London program—and SARS, I think, can point out to us that we need to recognize that we can’t centralize all our services in one place. SARS has taught us a lot. We need to make sure that if there were some sort of emergency in Toronto, other facilities across this province would have the ability to provide a transplantation.

So I commend individuals like Cheryl Sardo, in my riding, who has been a big advocate for the kidney-pancreas transplantation program, and Jane Tucker, who has been a strong advocate for the maintenance of the cardiac program in London. Dr Bill Wall has worked very hard over the years to build a world-class program in London. These are programs that we need to ensure we do everything we can to support. The bill is very important, because we do need to do what we can to help those individuals out.

Another thing that we can do—and perhaps it is something that could be attached to this bill, maybe at committee—is find ways to improve it within the education system. Dr Wall has developed a program for grade 11 students, but there are only 17 school boards in the province that have adopted this. Let’s look at expanding that to every school board. Let’s look at work being done to try to develop something for the grade 5 curriculum. Let’s see that implemented, because those young individuals are going to take that information and encourage their parents to become organ donors.

I commend the member, and it’s wonderful to see your sister here today, because she’s a true example of why we should be supporting organ donations in this province.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** It’s true that, as the member from Scarborough East said, this is not a partisan issue. It is only every now and then that we can in this House deal with some issues where ideology is not a factor. It is truly a good time to be able to discuss that, and it’s a good time for citizens watching, and the few that are in this assembly, to be able to say, “Goodness, they can co-operate from time to time.”

It’s true: from time to time we can and do co-operate, because the issues are more philosophical and human rather than ideologically driven by a particular party policy and/or platform. In this regard, the member from Scarborough East is very correct.

I would argue that adoption disclosure reform is very similar to the very issue we’re dealing with here, and that is why it is good to be able to discuss these bills in this forum, where members can vote without having to be pushed by the political party ideology to say “nay” or “yea” to them. That’s why I suspect the majority, if not all of the members present today, will support the bill put forth by the member from Scarborough East, as I hope the members will do similar to Bill 77 on adoption disclosure reform. Because we believe, on balance—“on



balance" meaning balancing rights, as I was speaking to the adoption disclosure reform—on balancing those rights, it ought to be the right of those children who have a wish to know who their parents are to be able to have easy access to it. Where parents wish not to be contacted, there is that veto in place. Balancing those rights, we ought to be making it easier.

In this particular case, dealing with the issue of Bill 17, I can't imagine what suffering people go through, waiting for organs that could be gotten if we made it easier, as the member from Scarborough East is trying to do with his bill. The current bill put forth today does make it easier for those who want to donate their organs to do so. At the moment, it's hit and miss. Ministry of Transportation forms are, I suspect, sometimes given out, sometimes not. There is no obligation, necessarily, there is no system in place, that would permit each and every one who goes for a driver's licence renewal to be told, "Fill out the form; sign it here; do it now." That's what this bill does, either through MTO and/or through the health card so that each time you go for a renewal you would, by matter of fact, fill out those forms, ensuring that you would have the ultimate say, as an individual, about what happens to your organs.

1120

At the moment, if there are two cards that are signed, the individual signing those cards—because there's ambiguity about your intentions, your family decides for you. In most cases I suspect families would rather not have the body touched in any way whatsoever. That ought not to be the case. The ultimate right of giving away an organ that belongs to you ought to be yours, and not the right of the family to decide what to do with it. But at the moment, where there is ambiguity, confusion, two cards signed, it's the family that decides. I know it's complicated for families to be able to decide what to do with the organs, I'm convinced it's complicated, but I suspect that ultimately families would rather see the body intact and sent away untouched to wherever we go after this land.

**Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** Whitby.

**Mr Marchese:** I suspect that if people had a choice they may not want to go to Whitby, but I could be wrong. I'm a Toronto boy. I'd kind of like to think everyone would like to be in Toronto, but I could be wrong too; I don't know. But I suspect that we go somewhere else.

I am very supportive of this bill. I know efforts have been made by the ministry and others involved to do as much education as possible to make people sensitive about those who suffer and about the fact that some of us die not because we want to but because things happen beyond our control, and if something should happen to us, that we should be conscious of our interest or desire to help others, given that some of our organs might be good enough to be used in some way or other for someone else, and give someone else who's alive but not well the opportunity to be alive and well. Educational efforts are there. I suspect we could be doing more by way of

how we educate the general public about their ability to be able to give an organ should they, by mishap, die.

While there are efforts, this is a good attempt, in my view, to be able to improve on what we've got, because the list of people waiting is very long. I'm not sure whether the previous member mentioned this, but patients awaiting transplants, by organ: heart, 43; kidney, 1,334; liver, 325; lung, 30; heart and lung, 2; kidney/pancreas, 39; pancreas, 5—a lot of people suffering, a lot of people waiting for organs so that they can have a chance to live in good health.

The consent that is given on a card makes it binding. The latest consent that one signs is the one that applies, thus eliminating the ambiguity that exists at the present moment. I support this and am convinced the rest of our caucus will be very supportive of this. I'm convinced the Liberals will and that your members will, and I suspect that your bill will pass, Steve. I'm not quite sure whether other changes are needed and that your government needs to reintroduce a different kind of bill. But should they decide, I suspect if that were to be the case, you would find support from the opposition, including your own members.

I congratulate the member for Scarborough East for bringing this bill forward. I'll be supporting it along with the other members of the New Democrats.

**Hon Mr Flaherty:** It's a privilege to speak to this matter following my colleague the honourable member for Trinity-Spadina. He mentioned that he wasn't too sure about the afterlife. I mentioned Whitby, of course. It's well-known in Whitby—I should invite the member for Trinity-Spadina to venture out of the 416 and visit the great town of Whitby. He'll discover, as we say in Whitby, that later on, in the afterlife, you can always tell which people in heaven are from Whitby because they're the ones who want to go home. He'll think about that.

I congratulate my colleague the member for Scarborough East for bringing this bill forward, and of course I intend to support it. I listened carefully to his quite moving description of what organ transplant has meant for his family and his sister. This is an issue, and I suppose a unique issue, in that all of us living in Ontario have this opportunity. All 12 million of us as individuals, regardless of where we live in the province, regardless of what our family situations are, what our occupations happen to be, what our educations are, what strains or difficulties we have in our life, have this unique opportunity as individual human beings to make a decision that can make the difference between life and death for one of our fellow citizens in Ontario. It is in that sense an affirmation of our lives together as a human family in Ontario and in Canada. As I say, it is a unique opportunity, in that sense, for us to act as individuals being mindful of the common good for other individuals and families in Ontario.

In my ministerial job, as Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, I have responsibility for science, technology and research in Ontario. I've been pleasantly encouraged in the past year to see, across



Ontario, the tremendous advances we have made in the life sciences, in the health sciences, in biotechnology, not simply to keep our bright folks in universities and in our teaching hospitals busy, and in farming and all the other creative aspects of scientific life in Ontario today, but because of the difference it makes for human beings in Ontario. We are going to have, and we do have, superb medical care, but the advances that are being made for the benefit of individuals and families in Ontario are nothing short of staggering. One part of that is transplantation.

Through research and development, through the massive investments of the government of Ontario over the past eight years and the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund and the Ontario Innovation Trust—just this week in Toronto we had the unveiling of the plans for MARS, medical and related sciences, which has a location in Toronto but also brings together our brilliant life science teachers and researchers from the University of Ottawa to the University of Windsor, right down the 401 corridor, this cluster of innovation, this cluster of research expertise in Ontario. All of this means, as we go forward, that people and families in Ontario will have even more opportunities to use transplants and other medical innovations and technologies. It means that this initiative by my colleague the member for Scarborough East is all the more important because of the new opportunities that will be presented monthly and yearly as we go forward.

The key people here are organ donors, of course, and also the families of donors. The families are often faced with making the quick moves happen that need to happen upon the loss of a loved one. The positive aspect is important. In tragic times, it is an opportunity for families to have some good come out of what are often very unfortunate circumstances in the loss of a loved one.

The brochure that is put out by the Trillium group, the Trillium Gift of Life Network organ and tissue donation—I encourage people to have a look at the brochure—talks about two requirements: completing a donor card and talking to your family about your decision to give the gift of life. Those are two essential elements, of course, not only completing the donor card when one applies for a licence—the donor card is on the form—but also speaking to your family, because it's self-evident that the family will need to act quickly and participate fully and know in advance—it would be helpful—in order to have an effective organ transfer and make that vital life-saving difference for another human being. It is about human dignity, it is about this unique opportunity that we have as people living together in Ontario society to reach out to someone we won't know, but someone whose life can be saved because of the foresight of another individual and his or her family, remembering our human dignity and that we are all God's children together here.

I would encourage everyone in Ontario to consider organ transplants, to fill out the card and to speak to your loved ones, to your family about it, so that when

inevitably we all pass away, some particular good can come of that, at that time, in this vital way. I use the word "vital" in its true meaning: in life and death. This is about vitality; this is about preserving life. I recommend it as the way to go. I support my colleague from Scarborough East and I applaud him for bringing forward this important initiative in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

1130

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** I'm proud to rise, for the people of Parkdale-High Park and, I think, the people of Ontario. I'm also glad to have an opportunity to be in agreement with the member for Scarborough East. I'm somewhat experienced in the possibility there will be few occasions when that will happen. That's not any judgment on the member. It's simply that I've had debate with him on probably a few hundred occasions. But I want to focus on the important issue at hand and congratulate the member opposite. I want to congratulate the courage of his sister to come forward in this fashion.

This is the most human of possible issues because it involves not just, as we're often presented with in this House, the situations of people in need of the understanding of the rest of us, but it really goes to the core of how we look at ourselves as human beings. It's tough for us to conceive that we may have body parts that would be available to others. That psychological part means there is a never a wrong time to be discussing this, putting it out in the open, trying to get past people's natural tendency to put this to the back of their minds, to put off the voluntary engagement of this because it makes us all confront our mortality.

I absolutely agree that this be brought forward. I agree not just with what's in the bill, which gives some general direction to the director, but with the way it was articulated by the member. The bill says certain things should happen in a general sense. The member says very specifically that he would like to see each person renewing their driver's licence or their OHIP to be asked, yes or no, which would be a substantial improvement if somehow that could be administratively arranged. I understand we have the capacity currently with our health cards to do that as people go into offices. It's a little trickier with the way we do driver's licences. It would be interesting to see how we would administratively achieve that. That quantitative approach is still needed. I understand there are 1.8 million people who have responded so far in renewing their health card under the voluntary system, so we can only anticipate that would be greater.

What is the potential to do more? The qualitative is certainly another aspect. We have to keep in mind that there have been trends. Organ donations are actually down in this province, and our waiting lists have grown. We're not saying that as a way of pointing fingers. It's simply to say there are fewer accident victims, fewer people who fit the profile of where they can make donations. The strategy also has to be qualitative.



I want to support this bill, but I also want to make people aware that we need to be very focused in this area on the idea that of the 1,600 people on waiting lists, 1,300 of them are not so much life and death; they're kidney transplant people who could benefit right now, who could get off dialysis and improve their quality of life to an extraordinary extent, rather than be tied to that machine. Also, as it happens to turn out, it would save the health system money. They have high survival rates and not high maintenance rates compared to what happens today.

But to do that we have to use the opportunity of this bill to talk about a few of the other things we need to have happen. For example, we need to have the simple capacity to retrieve organs in this province. That's not available at all the hospitals that it should be. The agreement with the hospitals to cover those costs when they're busy, especially the trauma centres: they are now having that attended to elsewhere. That's a very difficult thing. It shouldn't be based on costs or problems. We know the health system is not a blank cheque, but this is a very specific area to be stick-handled and worked through. I would commend that to the member's caucus and cabinet, to move on that.

My comments here are really reinforced by George Marcello, a person who needs to be heard on this subject. He has an organization called Step by Step. He was an organ transplant recipient. He has literally walked across the country and across this province on two occasions, over many months, for four years, to raise awareness of this. He would like us to consider even further issues in terms of, yes, the qualitative capacity, to make sure that there are the centres that can make things happen, that we have the teams in place. There is a proposal in front of the government right now that community hospitals have those teams in place. They don't at the present time. So we need to respond positively to that. He, though, also wants to address the idea of leadership, that we need to be acknowledging this on an ongoing basis. It was a few throne speeches ago that he was acknowledged. He has had some trouble getting heard by the government in the time in between.

I think there is a need for this to happen on an ongoing, everyday, every-throne-speech basis, until we have some of the participation rates, for example, of living donors, who can help with kidneys and livers. We are not anywhere near some of the other provinces in terms of what's happened there.

I commend the member for the debate. I will support the bill and I hope other members of the House will do likewise.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** In 1995 I had a constituent who was a friend call me in my office here at Queen's Park. He called, and he was crying. Imagine the impact of having a man who was nearly 60 years old crying because he had been told by his doctor a couple of weeks earlier that he would die if he didn't receive the necessary organ transplant. Unfortunately for him and for his family, the organ was not forthcoming

and he did die. I'm not going to mention his name or his family's name at this time or even the type of organ transplant, because I decided just this morning to speak in support of this bill. I have not had an opportunity to discuss with them and I have some concerns about privacy on that.

He knew of an organ that was available in the United States and it could not be transported here quickly enough—the time allotment and keeping it refrigerated—for it to be transplanted in order for him to live. The organ, because of the time lapse involved, had to be available within Ontario.

I want to commend the member Mr Gilchrist for bringing this bill forward, because it addresses a situation like that, something that would be similar in years to come. I think we have all had people near us, members of family or friends or constituents, who have called us or spoken to us from time to time and explained that they have had an organ transplant and have explained how it has changed their lives.

I want to show the comparison. I golf with a fellow at my club who had a kidney transplant two years ago, I believe it was. This individual was having trouble even walking, even getting around because of the pain, the inconvenience, the incontinence. He had a transplant and he explained how he felt like a totally different person. Again, because I just decided to speak on this bill this morning, I won't mention his name either.

It's really important that we all understand the change in a person's life as a result of having an organ transplant. Anything we as parliamentarians can do to enable those individuals to have a transplant is important. So again, Mr Gilchrist, I commend you for bringing this forward.

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I remember the euphoria when we, as much younger people, read in the newspapers that Dr Christiaan Barnard had performed the first heart transplant. Then of course we read after that of other organ transplants. Each one of us, I'm sure, thought, what if that would be necessary for us at some point later in our life?" Each one of us is looking for that fountain of youth. Each one of us is looking for immortality, much like the explorers did. Ponce de Léon, around 1500-and-change when he discovered Florida, was looking for the fountain of youth. We all want that. It's human nature.

None of us is going to find immortality. None of us is going to find the fountain of youth. Let's be realistic. But what we do want is to live a few more years in enjoyment. We want to live a few more years in better health. That's exactly what this bill is addressing.

The member from Parkdale-High Park said that administratively he's curious as to how we might be able to do it. I share that concern with that member, but I would say that if anybody knows anything about administration, governments do. We have a lot of it.

I just want to reread briefly what the bill says:

"Organ or tissue donation form



"Despite the regulations, every health card that the general manager issues or renews for an insured person of at least 16 years of age after this section comes into force shall be accompanied by a written form that allows the person to sign a consent that allows the person's organs or tissue specified in the consent to be used after the person's death for transplant purposes."

Then of course it goes on to suggest the amendment to the Highway Traffic Act, and it states:

"Every driver's licence that the minister issues to a person or renews after this subsection comes into force shall be accompanied by a written form that allows the person to sign a consent that allows the person's organs or tissue specified in the consent to be used after the person's death for transplant purposes."

The explanatory note states that, "Under the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act, if a person gives more than one valid such consent, the latest valid consent that the person has given prevails over all other consents that the person has given."

This is not unlike a will. I think this is an absolutely fabulous piece of legislation. The only thing I could ever say is, why did it take so long for us to bring this forward? I say to the member from Scarborough East: congratulations. I will be most happy to support this.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I want to indicate from the beginning that I will be supporting this bill that is before the House today. I think there's a great need out there. There isn't anybody in this House and very few people in this province who wouldn't agree there's a great need out there for organs to be transplanted when the circumstances are appropriate.

All of us know individuals whose lives have been saved or prolonged considerably by a transplant being able to take place. It's a traumatic event for both families. It's a traumatic event for the person who's going to receive the organ. It is a very difficult decision sometimes when that decision has to be made by a family instead of an individual. All of us who have that opportunity to make that decision should make that decision clear. The member's proposed bill today makes that an easier process and establishes the fact, as the member for Kitchener has indicated, that this is similar to a will in that it does say that the last pronouncement of the individual is the one that counts.

I share the concern of the member for Parkdale-High Park, who indicates, and I think all members would agree, that there's a need for more trauma centres or more areas where we can have transplants take place, because we could have all kinds of organs available, hundreds upon hundreds of organs available; if we don't have the wherewithal to have those transplants take place, then it is not as helpful as we would like.

This certainly deals with a very significant portion of that: making it easy for people wishing to do so to make known their desire, their willingness to have a transplant upon their passing. Other decisions are made—and you often hear people say, within a family, that their tragedy that they experienced themselves was mitigated some-

what—not entirely, of course—by the fact that organs from a family member were transplanted to another person so that that person's quality of life could be enhanced, that person's life could be saved. That's a very generous gift that is made, and a gift that all of us have an opportunity to make by making our views known.

The member has picked two components that I think are important in letting everybody know that the organ is available. Time is always of the essence in these circumstances; we recognize that. So having that information readily available—and again, the decision, being made by an adult, should be compelling and should be the final decision that is made. Sometimes people do change their minds throughout a lifetime. Initially, they may not wish to have an organ transplant; that may be somewhere in the records. But subsequent to that they have either convinced themselves or been convinced of the virtue of permitting their organs to be used for transplant purposes, and they make that known. I go back to the fact that the last will of the person is the most important will that we should take into consideration.

Mr Gilchrist mentions his sister; it's a very personal case. Many people in this province know friends, perhaps relatives, who have benefited immensely by the fact that someone else was prepared to give up an organ upon their death.

Even for people who are alive—I think of kidney transplants, for instance; I admire individuals who are a definite match and are often from the family who are willing to give a kidney for someone else. I recognize that we're not talking about that necessarily in this bill, but I'll tell you, that is a very significant sacrifice, a very kind and generous gesture on that person's part.

One of our former colleagues in here, Don Cousens, received a transplant in that particular manner, and there was a lot of publicity about it. Don was a favourite of many of us in this House, and we were pleased to see that he benefited from this.

I think this bill is the kind of bill that will have a consensus support in this House and I intend to support it.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I am happy to stand up in firm support of this bill before us today. I'm very happy to have an opportunity to agree with my colleague Steve Gilchrist across the floor, because we don't often agree on many issues. It is a pleasure today to be able to support this resolution.

I've met Patti, your sister, Mr Gilchrist, and I must say she's better looking than you.

**Mr Gilchrist:** That's not a high standard.

**Ms Churley:** Steve's not insulted. I think Patti was quite pleased by the remark.

I talked to Patti and I certainly want to welcome her and say on behalf of my colleagues that we're all supporting this bill. We're very happy to know that your transplant was a success—I know I should be speaking through the Speaker, but directly to you, Patti—and that you're doing so well. I hope that you continue to do well; I'm sure that you will.



I'm glad you're here because it's a good opportunity for all of us to see the face of—it's always good to see the face of—the piece of legislation we're talking about, because very frequently in this place we stand up and talk about issues and we deal with so much legislation and so many issues that I think quite often we forget about the people who are affected by the legislation we're passing or not passing.

I certainly am aware of this issue and have been for some time. I know that our colleague Frances Lankin did some work on this bill, and I believe again there was all-party support for the work she did. I know that this bill before us today, or resolution—is it a bill or a resolution? It's a bill, which is even better than a resolution, of course—goes even further. I think it's really critical.

1150

I know that I signed something, but I can't remember what I signed, whether it was a health card—I think it was when I got my last my health card. It's something that in our daily lives, while we're healthy and members of our family are healthy, we don't think about. None of us wants to think about dying. So it's something we might tend to put off or, if we've done it years ago, we might do it again some other year and perhaps write something differently, but only we know that. I've never talked to my family members about it, for instance. I've never taken the time. I've signed a card at some point, but I've never taken the time to say, "Should I reach an untimely end, this is what I want." It's important that we do that, so that if there is any dispute, you've made it very clear to your family members what your wishes are.

The legislation before us today is very important in carrying this forward. As you know, I'm all for bringing in any new legislation that will help prevent untimely deaths, when we now have the medical expertise and ability to actually save lives, like Patti Gilchrist's. Years ago we didn't have those opportunities. But there are so many people today living long, fulfilled lives because of the heart or other transplants they were able to receive.

In my view, there is no greater gift that any of us can give in this lifetime than to give our organs, if we die prematurely, to people who do not have to die prematurely should they be able to receive what is quite rightly called the gift of life.

I mention specifically that I'm all for any legislation that will help save lives. I'm going to briefly tie this to my bill, which was on earlier this morning, the adoption disclosure bill, and urge members to not only vote for this bill from Mr Gilchrist but also to support my bill. I hope I was clear in outlining some of the problems and misconceptions that people have about the bill and some of their concerns and fears. But one of the things I didn't dwell on long enough, I believe—and I want to talk about it in this context again—is that adoption disclosure reform will save lives as well.

For instance, the government recently announced—your government, Mr Gilchrist, and we all support this, of course—pre-screening for women who have a family history of ovarian and breast cancer, because we now

know that if it's caught early enough, people can be saved. But if it's not caught early enough, then quite frequently people die unnecessarily, because they did not have the genetic information from their biological families. One of the problems under the existing law, just so you know, is that you first have to be diagnosed with the health problem and then you can apply for special disclosure on your biological family's health issues. But by then it's usually too late.

I read a letter into the record from a woman whose life was saved, luckily, because she found out that her birth mother had died from ovarian cancer. In fact, her doctor told her that had she not found out that information when she did and had her ovaries removed, in two years she would have had untreatable ovarian cancer and would have died.

That's just one example of many, many thousands of people across this province—I think over 300,000 people are adoptees out there, who could have genetic illnesses being passed on to them and their children.

Kariann Ford is another woman who came and spoke before the committee about a terrible liver disease she had inherited. She didn't know. She'd been ill for years. She had three children, and they all now have this disease. She's very upset and angry that she wasn't given that information so she could have made choices about having children. She said quite clearly that she doesn't know what she would have done, but she didn't have the choice.

These are but two examples of adoptees who are not given that vital information that in many cases would actually save lives.

Coming back to the bill before us now, I do see that parallel. I have to say very clearly to all the members, there is a connection. I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of this bill. I know that all members will support the bill. It's one of the more important non-partisan issues that has come before this House in a while now. I'm not going to go into what we're debating. In the meantime it's really refreshing to be able to stand here this morning and have a discussion and a debate about bills that actually will save lives if acted on.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member moving the motion has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Gilchrist:** Let me start off by thanking my colleagues from all three parties for their extraordinarily generous comments and the true compassion they've shown: the members for Elgin-Middlesex-London, Trinity-Spadina, Whitby-Ajax, Parkdale-High Park, Kitchener Centre and Toronto-Danforth. The comments that many of the members made did in fact highlight that oft in this place we do spar, and spar mightily, on issues that we each consider of substance but are, in large measure driven by partisan political motives. I want to thank all the members for making it very clear today that they share my perspective that this is an issue that transcends politics. This is about improving the quality of life.

I take the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London's suggestion about improving education. In fact, I would love to see a copy of that protocol that Dr Wall, I believe he said, had worked up. I think that's something that could be seen as another extension on the methodology that the Trillium Gift of Life Network uses to raise awareness of this important issue, to ensure that people do sign the organ donor card. As flawed as the process may be today, at least do that; at least talk to your family. Make it clear to them where you stand on the issue of organ donation, not just about reinforcing the decision you've made, presumably a positive one, but encouraging them to think along similar lines.

I want to commend all the members for the merits of this bill on behalf of the 1,781 people on the waiting lists right now, and as the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has very correctly pointed out, many of those people won't make it to the date where a transplant is available. Twenty-three people in the London area, more than that province-wide, die while on the waiting list.

I want to thank my sister, Patti, for coming in today and being the face of transplant recipients and I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time for private members' public business has expired.

#### ADOPTION DISCLOSURE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** We will deal first with ballot item 5, standing in the name of Ms Churley.

Ms Churley has moved second reading of Bill 16. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Before we proceed with that, we will handle the next item of business.

#### ORGAN OR TISSUE DONATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT AU DON D'ORGANES OU DE TISSU

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** We will now deal with ballot item 6, standing in the name of Mr Gilchrist.

Mr Gilchrist has moved second reading of Bill 17. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough East.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** Thank you very much. I know this is somewhat extraordinary, but in deference to the comments particularly made by the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London that this is an issue where every day of delay possibly compromises the life of someone in Ontario, I would ask the members for consideration to put the question on third reading of this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is within the authority of the body of members here assembled that you could ask for unanimous consent to bypass committee, but it is not within our purview to pass third reading of it. Ordinarily it would be referred to the committee of the whole House, it could be referred to a committee, or you could ask for unanimous consent of the House to have the committee bypassed and have it moved directly to third reading, but we can't pass third reading.

**Mr Gilchrist:** I would take the latter route and ask the House for unanimous consent to order it for third reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? It is agreed.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.*

#### ADOPTION DISCLOSURE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until they are named by the Clerk.

##### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Martin, Tony
Baird, John R.	Gilchrist, Steve	McLeod, Lyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Gravelle, Michael	Miller, Norm
Bisson, Gilles	Guzzo, Garry	Munro, Julia
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hastings, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Boyer, Claudette	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Peters, Steve
Churley, Marilyn	Klees, Frank	Phillips, Gerry
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Crozier, Bruce	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
DeFaria, Carl	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Marland, Margaret	Wood, Bob
Duncan, Dwight	Martel, Shelley	

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

##### Nays

Bradley, James	Gill, Raminder	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Hardeman, Ernie	Parsons, Ernie
Coburn, Brian	Hudak, Tim	Stockwell, Chris
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	McDonald, AL	



**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 41; the nays are 14.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96(j), the bill stands referred to the committee of the whole House—unless I recognize the member for Toronto-Danforth.

**Ms Churley:** In the spirit of the mood in this House today, I would like to ask for unanimous consent, since this bill or similar bills have already gone through two lengthy committee hearings, to proceed directly to third reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I wanted to be sure that we understood the same request, and it is actually a request that it bypass committee and be ordered for third reading. That is as far as this body of people today is—

**Ms Churley:** I understand that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is your wish, for unanimous consent for that?

**Ms Churley:** Yes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Ms Churley has asked for unanimous consent. Is it agreed? It is not agreed. Pursuant to standing order 96(j), the bill stands referred to the committee of the whole House.

**Ms Churley:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like the bill sent to the justice committee, then.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Ms Churley has requested that the bill be referred to the justice committee. Is it agreed? It is agreed.

The business of this House being finished, we stand adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.*

## VISITORS

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There is young man who is a page here from my riding, Vladimir Sikman, who immigrated to Canada three years ago from the former Bosnia. His family joins us today in the members' gallery: his mother, his sister, his uncle and a friend of the family. That's Alex Stupar, Biljana Marinkovic, Loiljana Sikman and Snezana Sikman. I want to welcome them to the Legislature and congratulate Vladimir on his remarkable achievements.

**Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome some special guests in the gallery here, a delegation championing the ITER Canada project: Clarington Mayor John Mutton, Clarendon CAO Frank Wu and a great champion for ITER, Garry Minnie.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly one of my constituents, a promising young student, Tausha Michaud, who will be going to the University of Ottawa next year, and my executive assistant, Sheryl Greenham.

## CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 14, 2003, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr Conway arising from the Speaker's ruling of May 8, 2003.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I believe the chief government whip had the floor.

**Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio):** For those in the galleries who weren't introduced, I would also thank them for joining us this afternoon. It's good to have several people in the gallery.

As I wound up last evening, I still had a few points I wanted to comment on. One is on tradition, some of the traditions of this House, some that have been changed and some that haven't, and also a bit on leadership, if I have a few minutes left from tradition.

I think of some of the wonderful traditions we have here. Yes, we did try to make a little variation. We live in a changing world. I look at the official opposition and their platform talking about a permanent election date. That's breaking from the tradition of the past, where the Prime Minister and/or the Premier have the opportunity to drop the writ and call a specific election date. I can follow some of the thinking. It has some pros and cons, but it's certainly breaking from tradition. It's a concern they've been expressing, and that's basically why we're debating here.

I think back to a break from tradition for night sittings, back to August 21, 1997. The opposition vigorously opposed it at that time, but it gave us an opportunity to get more debate in—

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** You were in opposition then.

**Hon Mr Galt:**—and the opportunity for the member for Kingston and the Islands to speak more in this Legislature and I'm sure he appreciated that opportunity.

I understand, going back several years, that the standing committees of this Legislature went on the road, went outside of these hallowed halls, and again there was great controversy. Now the lobby is that they want to spend more time out on the road rather than less, so here's another break.

One I find rather interesting, a tradition of our British system, going back to England, is that the Prime Minister did not come into Parliament for question period. It is only in recent years, I understand, that he comes in for a 10-minute period. Now there's a tradition that I'm sure if we implemented here and were consistent with the British House, you'd be very upset if our Premier was only here for 10 minutes on the occasional day.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I thought we already had.

**Hon Mr Galt:** He's here a lot of the time. We have tremendous leadership in our Premier, Ernie Eves, as we did with Premier Harris.

We have enabled municipalities to have mail-in ballots, which seems to be working very well for municipalities—a break from tradition.

As I look to the third party, It's my understanding they're pushing for representation by population. I think

you only have to look to countries like Italy where there have been some 40 governments in about 40 years, give or take a bit—very unstable government as a result of breaking from that kind of tradition.

I think you have to look at the different issues with tradition and evaluate them. In this case, we're certainly living in a changed world, an electronic world. We're getting instant feedback in so many different areas. Here was an opportunity for not only the Premier but the Minister of Finance to get instant feedback from people across Ontario. Those who were invited were the ones who had enough interest to come and present, either to the minister or to the finance committee. It wasn't just that we dreamed up who would get invited; it was those people who had the intestinal fortitude to take time to put together a presentation and come forward. So this was improved communication and good communication. Mr Eisenhower once said that politics should be the part-time profession of every good citizen. Certainly, if you have good communications, that's exactly what would happen.

In the last minute and a half, I just want to compliment the tremendous leadership that our party and this government has had over the last eight years with Premier Harris, and the tremendous change for the good that has occurred in this province. Now, with Premier Eves at the helm, things are going extremely well for this province.

We have developed, as a party and as a government, a reputation for doing what we said we were going to do, regardless of what the opposition has to say. As we roll out a platform—whenever the Premier decides that that should be rolled out—I can tell you that what's in that platform will be carried out by our party, if we're fortunate enough to be the government in Ontario. That's a tremendous reputation, which no party in Canada or the US has had in the past, a reputation of doing what you said you were going to do.

In the last few minutes: my compliments on the leadership shown during the SARS outbreak here in Canada. I'm told there are only 10 people left in the hospital. It's almost totally over in the province of Ontario, thanks to the quick response of both Premier Eves and Minister Clement, and the hard work of Dr James Young and Dr Colin D'Cunha. With their extremely good guidance and direction in bringing in the medical emergency regulation, the first since 1867—as a result of that and of those four people in particular, SARS is now under control and we look forward to a very healthy Toronto and province of Ontario.

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** We're at the beginning of a new day, a new leg of the debate we have before us. I want to remind those who may be watching, and maybe one or two of those around the precinct who have forgotten over the last few days, that we are debating a motion by my colleague Mr Conway. It says, "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario," and this has had two amendments put to it.

I want to give a personal perspective today. A lot has been said about tradition. A lot has been said about what is in the standing orders and what is not in the standing orders. But I want to approach this from a personal perspective.

To put this in context, so that you'll understand why I'm going to support this motion and the amendments that have been put to it, I have to go back to the spring of 1993, some 10 years ago. That was when my predecessor, Remo Mancini, after some 18 years serving in this Legislature, decided it was time to move on and resigned. It came to me then, having been a long-time supporter of Remo and the Liberal Party in Ontario, both provincially and federally, that I had the opportunity to seek the nomination. At the time, I was the mayor in Leamington, a job that I was very humbled to have and enjoyed very much. But it was an opportunity to seek the nomination to run provincially, which I did.

**1340**

In August of that year we had the nomination. I was very proud, after a tough battle for the nomination, to be accepted as the candidate. It was in the fall of 1993—on October 25, I think it was—when the federal election had just concluded, that the by-election for the then riding of Essex South was called. On December 2, 1993, I was elected to this Legislature.

I visited it, frankly, only one time before that, so I hadn't had the opportunity to be around the Legislature very much and get the sense of what this place really means. I encourage every citizen of the province of Ontario, if you have the opportunity—notwithstanding the kind of things that we're debating right now—that you come to this Legislature, sit in the galleries and get a sense of what this place is all about.

On December 2, 1993, I was very proud to have been elected to this Legislature. After the appropriate procedures were gone through, where my name was gazetted, I was welcomed to be sworn in on December 12, 1993. I'll never forget that.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I applauded.

**Mr Crozier:** That's right; the Minister of Environment did applaud that day—very kindly so. They told me you get applauded twice in this place: once when you arrive and once when you leave. So we'll applaud you guys.

December 12, 1993, I came in here to take my oath of office. Deborah Deller, from the Clerk's desk—after I had taken the oath from Monsieur DesRosiers, I was brought up into the chamber to give me some idea of what was going to unfold that day. It was late in the morning, and Ms Deller and I came in here—I don't know whether she remembers it, but I will never forget it.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** It was a snowy day.

**Mr Crozier:** No, it was a nice, clear, crisp, bright, beautiful day.

We came in, and I was told what the procedure would be and how I would be asked by the Speaker to take my seat.



I want to note one thing: that at least in nine years I've moved down three rows, so it's coming. I expect next time to be sitting over there in the front row.

I asked Ms Deller if she would just leave me alone in this chamber for a few minutes, because I never, ever, in my life—and I'm speaking to some of the young people who are in the chamber today and who may be watching—expected that I would have the opportunity to serve in this place.

There were approximately 11 million people in this province—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Twelve.

**Mr Crozier:** At that time there were 11.

At that time I was one of 130 representatives—now 103—and I thought, how special it is to be chosen out of some 10 million or 11 million people, to now be one of 103 who sit in this place. I thought to myself then, as I think many of the members here do, that if I ever, ever arrived at the point where I was no longer humbled by this opportunity that I have, if I no longer felt that I could serve the people of Ontario, then it would be time to leave this place. It's the fact that we have—individually, even in the opposition; but I think the burden is heavier when it's on government and on the ministers—the responsibility to represent the people of the province of Ontario as best we can. We are their spokespersons.

That brings me to where this motion has brought us, and where the recent actions of this government have brought us. Back on March 12, I think it was, the Premier, for whatever reason, decided to prorogue the session, did so—I suspect that it was done with some forethought—and that we would return to this place on April 30 for the throne speech.

It's been suggested that the Premier was in a dilemma then because he had promised that the budget would be presented before the end of the fiscal year. That's why I say that when the session was prorogued, I suspect they gave some thought to the Premier's promise that the budget would be presented before April 30. We've been told in here that it presented a dilemma to the Premier. If that's the way it is, it was a dilemma of his own making. Therefore, there is no way, in my view, that you can use the excuse that he had no alternative but to present the budget outside this Legislature just to save face.

They certainly should have thought about it, and I think did think about it, before they ever prorogued. That is part of this feeling I have that this government does have contempt for this Legislature, because they knew full well what they were doing. And if they didn't, if the Premier was put in this position by some fate or accident, they certainly should have known what they were doing. I think, seeing all the circumstances lined up, that this government knew full well what they were doing and their intention was to simply go around the people of Ontario. They were probably ready to call an election at that time.

Then what happened? The Magna budget was met with an outcry not only from us, the members of this Legislature, but from the people of Ontario. It was the

day the budget was presented that I looked back to the series of events from early spring 1993 that brought me here, and never have I felt so irrelevant in this place. I honestly thought up to that time, on those long days when we were debating issues here, that we knew we were going to lose the vote, because the government has the numbers, but I still thought it was worthwhile. I thought it meant something. But that day when this government took the Magna budget outside of this place, I'd never felt so irrelevant. I wasn't given the opportunity to speak on behalf of my constituents. It doesn't matter to me what political stripe they are; I still earned and have been voted to represent all of those people, and on that day I couldn't because this government wouldn't let me. That's why I feel their actions were contemptuous.

For them to again give the excuse that they had no alternative—there was an alternative. First of all, they didn't need to prorogue the session. We could have come back on March 17 and the budget could have been presented in its normal fashion. If they wanted to have a throne speech, then fine: prorogue the session, bring it back before the end of April and have your throne speech and your budget. They had the control, folks. Speaker, you know and all of us in here know that they had the levers. They knew exactly what they were doing. They knew exactly that they were taking the right away from me and other members of this Legislature to listen and to speak on behalf of my constituents.

It seems to me that it's a trait of this government to always want to blame something else. We can go back to Walkerton. Practically the first words out of Premier Harris's mouth were to blame someone else. Well, we found out later, through an inquiry, that they weren't the only ones to blame. There was enough blame to go around. But rather than fix it, rather than get at the problem, the first thing this Premier said was, "I'm going to blame someone else." That's what he did. And the blame goes on. When it came to the budget, this Premier said, "I had no choice. It was somebody else's fault. I had to do it differently."

**1350**

It's getting even worse. Yesterday there was a minister, who is here today, who said—well, no, excuse me, I'll go to the quote from Premier Eves. Premier Eves says, "Public servants, acting on their best judgment, put forward orders in council to cover any eventuality, to make sure the government is not stuck." Public servants didn't sign that order in council. Ministers signed the order in council; ministers had the last decision. I don't even know what the bureaucracy may have suggested to them, but it doesn't matter; it's irrelevant. It's what the ministers decided to do; it's what the Premier decided to do.

Not only does this continuous finger-pointing go on, but a minister of the crown was quoted yesterday as saying, "It was a long winter, it hasn't been that great a spring," which I certainly agree with, "the Iraq war was unsettling for the people, the SARS crisis has been hard on people," which I agree with, and then he suggested



that a tragedy in Toronto in the last couple of days had something to do with the position this government is in.

**Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** I didn't say that. You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Mr Crozier:** I'm not ashamed, Minister. I'll quote what it says here in the paper. You said, "We had a tragedy yesterday in Toronto"—and I wasn't going to go into this detail—"with the young girl being murdered. These are difficult times. I think there's a sense of malaise and concern. Things haven't been what they usually are in the springtime." Now, is there anything I said that wasn't correct?

The point is that everything this government does or anything that goes wrong, it's always somebody else's fault, and it's time—

**Hon Mr Flaherty:** Misquoting people—you should be ashamed of yourself.

**Mr Crozier:** This government should be ashamed of itself, Minister. That's what I'm trying to point out. This all could have been avoided had you not tried to blame someone else and said, "I had absolutely no choice."

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** That's so awful.

**Mr Crozier:** Well, when you speak in this place, the only thing you can do is tell things how you see them. I've watched lots of times when I didn't agree with what you were saying; that's fine. In fact, the minister who is saying things right now was talking about the order in council being posted. He says, "It's posted. They're always posted. It's right over there." Two people were over there and they couldn't find it. Your own staff couldn't find it. Ministry staff couldn't even find it. So here we are—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Go to the Web site. It was there.

**Mr Crozier:** I don't always agree with what you say, and I quite frankly don't care if you don't agree with what I say.

But notwithstanding all this, there was that day, March 27, when I felt pretty irrelevant. I came to this place perhaps a little bit naive. I will leave this place some day—and I hope it's a day of my own choosing—when I am not so naive.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** I hope it's soon.

**Mr Crozier:** Well, I'm not surprised at that. That's why I added "at a day of my own choosing." I hope that attitude changes. I hope I've had the opportunity to make a difference in this province. I hope I've had the opportunity to make a difference, not because I had to fight for it but because it was a right of being a member of this Legislature.

So, Speaker, I needn't go on much more. I've given you the reasons why I think this government should be found in contempt.

I'll end with somebody else's words. This is a quote. These are the words of Mac Davis. Some of us who are a little older might appreciate this. I'm going to end today with a comment to the government in the words of Mac Davis in his song *It's Hard to be Humble*:

"Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble  
"When you're perfect in every way."  
I just wish you didn't feel that way.

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security):** I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate.

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** No Mad Dog?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** No, I'm going to be quite reserved.

Over the past seven or eight years, as a minister of the crown, you don't get those opportunities that those of us who spent 10 years in opposition had. We certainly were on our feet virtually every day when we had a small caucus, as the Speaker will recall. Many of us had to carry three or four critic portfolios, so there was no shortage of speaking opportunities.

This is a difficult one to speak to in many respects. Mr Speaker, I respect you, I respect the office you hold and I respect this place. I've been a member here for over 22 years, and it's with great regret that I have to stand on my feet and say that I disagree with the conclusion you reached with respect to the actions of the government related to the budget. I think the Liberal motion that budgets should be delivered in this House—and I think, in some respects, we can agree with that. But the reality is that there are certain circumstances—and the Liberal government found themselves in such a circumstance a few years ago. They determined they were in such a circumstance that they felt compelled to deliver a budget outside of this House. At the time, I don't believe we, as a party, criticized that decision. We understood that there were extenuating circumstances which put the government in a position where if they wanted to come forward with a budget at that point in time, this was the only option, in their view, and we weren't critical.

I think there were extenuating circumstances in this situation. As I said, I think that under normal circumstances most of us would like to see the House presented with a budget. In this instance, the House wasn't sitting, and the Premier had made a commitment to the people of Ontario that he was going to change the way budgets were handled in this province, in terms of making sure that before the end of the fiscal year the budget was presented to the people of Ontario. He and the government felt very strongly—and I think that's a trademark of both the Harris and Eves governments—that when we make a promise, we make the maximum effort to keep that promise, and I think our record stands up to scrutiny in that regard.

So, Mr Speaker, I believe that there were extenuating circumstances. As I said, I very much respect and appreciate your views, but again, I respectfully disagree.

I want to talk about a few things, and I guess we have the latitude to do that in this debate. Over the past six months or so, I suppose the Liberal Party has been trying to portray itself as something different in many respects, in terms of balanced budgets, justice issues, law-and-order issues. I'm not sure how the public feels about this,



but I would take this opportunity to remind them about some of the things that happened in the past when we did have a Liberal government in Ontario and about how they treated these issues during their five years in government.

**1400**

Even most recently we had a justice critic for the Liberal Party engage in a breach of security in one of our correctional institutions. The member protested—it was quite ironic—after I mentioned this in a response to one of his questions that he had engaged and participated knowingly in a breach of security, and he jumped up and said, “The member opposite isn’t following the rules of the House.” How ironic could that be? The member engages in a serious breach of security in one of our correctional institutions and he complains about me supposedly breaking some rule of this House.

It makes you wonder about their real commitment to law and order and justice issues in this province, and I think it raises serious questions about leadership in that party.

I saw a letter to the editor written to one of the member opposite’s local newspapers, very supportive of him taking a Toronto Star reporter into a correctional facility under false pretences. I guess you can try to paint it that way, but this is a member who undoubtedly aspires to being a justice minister in a future government, if they’re that fortunate. Can you imagine someone who wants to be a justice minister knowingly involving himself and his party in a breach of security in this province? What does that say about their conduct when and if they hold office?

That member should have been removed by his leader for that activity. He was not. That’s not only a reflection on the individual member but on the leadership of that party and should send out a very clear signal to the people of this province that they are not fit to govern the province of Ontario.

I want to talk a bit about this issue in terms of corrections. We know, and we’ll be the first to acknowledge, we have challenges in our correctional system, especially with the remand population. Our remand population has grown in the last five years by over 30%. There’s a variety of reasons for this.

**Mr Gerretsen:** More judges.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** The member for Kingston has always aspired to being a judge. We’ll see what we can do for him in the next government.

There’s a whole range of reasons for this.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Bob, we’ll make you head of the LCBO.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I’ll hold you to that.

I want to say that this government, unlike its predecessor governments of the NDP and Liberals, has moved to address these very serious problems. These didn’t happen overnight. These didn’t just pop up in 1995, that we had overcrowding, that we had a very old, antiquated correctional system in this province going back into the early 1800s, costing us as taxpayers significant monies—\$260, \$280 a day—to keep someone

incarcerated in one of our provincial facilities. The Provincial Auditor pointed this out to the Liberal government. He pointed it out to the NDP government. I ask you, what government took action? It was a Conservative government. The Conservative government has spent close to half a billion dollars renovating and restoring the correctional system in Ontario. There’s still more to do.

That member and his party get up and criticize us for the correctional system in Ontario, but take a look at their platform for the upcoming provincial election—not one reference, not one commitment, not one dollar sign attached to any future investments in the correctional system of Ontario. Again, that should raise serious questions in the minds of any elector in this province: how serious are they about these issues? Are they merely trying to score political points at the expense of all of us as politicians in terms of our credibility? I think that’s the case.

When we’re talking about this, we should again go back to the five years of Liberal rule in this province. What was their legacy? I was around during those days. I can recall two Solicitors General being forced to resign, one for going into a police station at 2 o’clock or 3 o’clock in the morning and harassing the duty sergeant. There’s the chief cop of the province of Ontario going into a police station at 3 o’clock in the morning, berating the night duty sergeant because they had arrested a personal acquaintance of that Solicitor General. What does that say about a Liberal Party in power?

Another Solicitor General took a case of beer on an OPP boat—again a clear violation of provincial law. Again, what kind of respect does a Liberal have for the laws of this province? Not very much, that’s clear, given their past history. That’s a legacy.

They can’t escape the aura—is that the right word? “Stench” might be.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** The smell.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** The stench, the smell of their cousins just down the road in Ottawa. They want to ignore it, but on so many issues we’ve heard their Liberal leader, Mr Dalton McGuinty, standing up and endorsing the positions of the federal Liberal government on justice matters.

The Young Offenders Act: he has always been a very strong supporter of the Young Offenders Act.

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** There’s no more Young Offenders Act.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** OK. In the past, he was supportive of the old Young Offenders Act.

**Mr Duncan:** What were the changes?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Well, we’re not happy with the changes either.

Let’s talk about the federal long gun registry. Even the member from Windsor has jumped up and supported it. You know, \$1 billion has been spent on this boondoggle, this bottomless pit. The national taxpayers’ federation says by 2012 we will have spent approximately \$2 billion of taxpayers’ hard-earned monies on something that serves no useful purpose in terms of improving public

safety in this great country of ours. That is supported by the provincial Liberal Party.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Supported by the Liberal leader; supported by the House leader.

People in Ontario, especially people in rural and small-town Ontario, who care about this intrusion in the lives of honest, law-abiding Ontarians should remember where the Liberal Party of Ontario stands on this issue. We're going to remind them. Don't forget about that.

Club Fed, another one: we know about the federal government having golf courses and riding stables. We can go back to when the Liberals ran the corrections system in Ontario: video games, pool tables. They joined the NDP in endorsing rock-climbing classes. What was to happen after that? Pole vaulting.

**Mr Bradley:** What happened to Camp Run-Amok?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Again, the member from St Catharines just reminds me: this government brought in Ontario's first strict-discipline facility for young offenders, a boot camp. The Liberals opposed it, fought vigorously against it. It has turned out to be an enormous success in terms of dropping recidivism rates for young offenders, yet the Liberals don't like it: "It's being tough on young offenders. We can't do that. We're Liberals." Come on.

Ontarians know where the Liberals stand on law-and-order issues. They're not going to be able to paint themselves in a different suit here, and we're going to continually remind the voters of this province, the taxpayers of this province, just what Liberals' views are, their real views on law-and-order issues.

Faint hope: another issue I want to talk about is the parole board, the National Parole Board. This is a very significant problem, because you support it. You support it, and you supported a parole system in Ontario that was fraught with weaknesses. I can't lay this on your doorstep, but of course we did have a serious incident as a result of the failures of the parole board system in Ontario.

Mr Speaker, as you know, being part of our party, we had a very different approach to the parole system of the province of Ontario. When we took office in 1995, one of the first things the Conservative government of Ontario did was to completely revamp the Ontario Board of Parole. We replaced its membership. It was plugged with prisoners' rights advocates. We put in people who cared about law and order and who made victims' rights and community safety their first priority.

1410

Speaking of victims, this is the government that formed and created an Office for Victims of Crime in the province. We've had two victims' bills of rights brought into this House. Those of us who were here will remember who voted against it. Who voted against the Victims' Bill of Rights? The Liberal Party of Ontario. This is a shameful record. You should all stand up and apologize in unison.

I want to talk about some of the things the Conservative government has done. Aside from wiping out the

Liberal-NDP legacy on the parole board, there's a whole range of areas where we have moved very positively to improve community safety in Ontario. One of the most topical at the moment, of course, is the sex offender registry. We're faced with this horrific murder in Toronto this week, and the police in Toronto are utilizing the registry. Personally, as part of this government, I am very proud. I give credit to Mr Turnbull, who was the Solicitor General at the time the legislation was passed. I'm very proud that we are the only jurisdiction in this country to have a sex offender registry. It is proving to be an asset to police services across the province, but it would be even more of an asset if the federal government would get on board and implement a national sex offender registry. That's long, long overdue.

A couple of other things we've done: we brought in the violent crime linkage analysis system, now in operation and proving very effective to track serial predators across this province. It's working very well.

The major case management system, which has been used for homicides and major crimes, is being used by the police services and was utilized, I should point out, during the SARS emergency. During the SARS emergency, they were able to utilize the major case management system in this province to very great and positive effect.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** The illegal immigration SWAT team.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Yes, I will get to that.

The Centre of Forensic Sciences: with this latest murder, we had scientists in working 24 hours a day, and they are prepared to do that in very serious emergencies to try to establish DNA evidence in situations like this. We have invested over \$20 million in upgrades to the Centre of Forensic Sciences and hired, I think, 72 scientists and technologists to work in the Centre of Forensic Sciences. That's a very significant investment in improving that centre, which is now one of the finest in North America, if not in the world.

The 2,000 police officers: I think we've all heard of the community policing program we brought in in 1998 or 1999. We've now hired 998 police officers in communities across this province. The last allotment was 24 officers assigned to medium- and small-sized police services to provide all those services with an intelligence officer in the wake of September 11, 2001. Even our small services now have the capability to have an intelligence officer as part of their staff. Of course, we've now made the commitment to add an additional 2,000 officers to the front lines across Ontario.

One of the things I'm most proud of is the Joe MacDonald scholarship fund. When I was in opposition, I got to know the Joe MacDonald family very well. This was a significant issue, a major failure of the Ontario Board of Parole, where Constable Joe MacDonald was executed—and I think that's the only word to use—in Sudbury by a parolee from the Ontario system. That led to a range of initiatives.

One of the first things I did as Solicitor General in 1995 was allow police to use hollow-point ammunition. I



think there's a pretty strong argument to be made that if Joe MacDonald and other police officers had been allowed to have that kind of ammunition at the time, he may not have been murdered. He shot one of the perpetrators, but the ammunition used at that time went right through the perpetrator and he was able to keep coming forward and participate in the murder of Constable MacDonald.

Again, we made significant changes in the parole board, I think as a direct consequence of Constable MacDonald's murder.

The thing that I'm most proud of, the initiative I'm most proud of, is the establishment of the fund to look after the education needs of the families of fallen officers. To my knowledge, it's the only such fund in Canada. The Treasurer at the time, Mr Eves, put in \$5 million of seed money to establish the fund. I think there are over 20 families now who have accessed the fund. It's paying the tuition for those children of fallen—not just police officers, but firefighters as well. This year, we made a decision to, as well, make a contribution to the cost of living of these students who are either returning to school, which may be the case with spouses, or for children who are finding it difficult, even though the tuition fund is available, to attend a post-secondary institution. We are also moving to assist in that regard.

Our House leader raised the issue of security. This is a new responsibility in a significant way of this ministry, Public Safety and Security. I was here a few years ago—it was the Solicitor General and Correctional Services. We've recombined those two ministries, but we've also added on the new responsibility of security, primarily border security. Certainly, one of the issues that we have with the federal government is their, in our view, insufficient response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. There is a whole range of areas where we can point that out. The North American security perimeter is one that we're very keen on.

I've already exhausted my time. I haven't done this for so long, and I'm enjoying it.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I know that the member, my neighbour from Brockville, envisions himself as the fighter of crime and the protector of public security. But perhaps he could explain to the people of Ontario why, in his budget this year, there has been a reduction of \$181 million. That's right out of the budget document. Maybe he can also explain to the people of Ontario, as the auditor pointed out in his last report, why there are over 10,000 arrest warrants not executed in this province. They're for things large and small. The point still is—and you may recall that he got quite exercised about it—as to why those 10,000 warrants aren't being executed.

To talk about it is one thing, but to do something about it and have the resources to actually do something about it is something quite different.

I don't want to talk about that. I want to talk about the substance of the motion.

But before doing that, I would just like to congratulate all of those health care workers who have been involved

in fighting SARS. I was very happy to hear today in the media that the World Health Organization has lifted the warning on Toronto and Ontario. I think this is good news for all of us. I think this is good news for the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and our country. I think all of the health care workers who have been involved in fighting this fight on the front line, many of them 24 hours a day, seven days a week, should be congratulated, each and every one of them. I know we will overcome this as well.

What I cannot understand—and I've been in this House for about eight years now, like many other members here—is why, first of all, we've been debating this motion for the last week now. It was exactly a week ago, and right about this time, when you came out with your ruling, Mr Speaker. I would just like to go back to what your ruling actually says.

You stated three principles in your ruling that I certainly agree with, and I would hope that the entire House agrees with as well. You stated, on page 234 of the Hansard of May 8, "First, what does the planned presentation of a budget speech outside the House suggest about the relevancy and primacy of Parliament? It is one thing not to make the traditional budget speech in the House because the government is backed into such a decision by an ongoing House process, or a budget leak;"—as what happened in the earlier instances that have been referred to by the government—"it is quite another for the government to have a deliberate plan not to do so."

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I found it interesting that the member from Leeds-Grenville talked about extenuating circumstances as to why the budget could not have been presented in the House. It's very simple. The budget couldn't be presented in the House because you, the government, prorogued the House. You didn't want us to come back on March 17 to talk about the issues that are out there, to deal with the budget you promised to deliver by the end of March. There weren't some sort of extenuating circumstances such as a major calamity out there that prevented us from meeting; it was you who decided you didn't want us to meet.

The reason, you may recall, Speaker, that was given at the time was that they wanted to take the budget to the people of Ontario. The parliamentary channel is available throughout this entire province. If you are anywhere in this province where there is a cable system in effect, and I've been all over the province, like many of you, in the small communities way up north, way down south, way down east—and quite often it's picked up by satellite within the community—the parliamentary channel is available. Besides, it's always carried on CBC, CTV, Global and various other stations as well.

Actually, when the so-called budget was presented at the Magna training centre, I believe there was only one channel that carried it. So for the life of me, I cannot understand what you mean when you say you wanted to bring the budget to the people of Ontario.

The people of Ontario are represented right here by the 103 of us who are elected, each one of us in our own riding. That whole argument that somehow by bringing it into a hall with 400 or 500 invited people and with very selective media coverage, you're bringing it to the people of Ontario, is just a great fallacy.

The other thing that should be remembered is that usually on budget day the opposition doesn't get to ask any questions about it; that normally doesn't happen until four or five days later. Budgets are always presented on a Thursday, and the first question period doesn't take place until the following Monday. Usually the play on that given day is either to the government in explaining its budget or to the various interest groups that may have some comments on it, and of course that still happened this time around.

There is one reason and one reason only, as far as I'm concerned, why the budget wasn't presented here: you did not want the House to sit—as a matter of fact, we didn't come back until some five or six weeks after that, April 30—and you didn't want to be subjected to the daily question period that may arise starting four or five days after the budget is actually presented. That is the only reason.

The second reason you gave, Speaker, in your ruling, was that, "... if left unchallenged, will this incident not embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes for other kinds of events that traditionally occur in the House?" That may very well be so, Speaker.

As far as I'm concerned, there are two very significant events that happen here each year, or every year and a half. The first is the throne speech. That's when the pageantry takes place. That's when the government basically lays out its vision of the kind of policies, the kind of laws it wants to see enacted over the next term of that particular Parliament. The second important day is budget day. A budget at any level of government, whether we're talking about here, whether we're talking about local government, about school boards, about the federal government, sets out the spending priorities of that government. It sets out where the government of that jurisdiction is going to spend its money. That's all contained in this document. As far as I'm concerned, everything that comes after that comes right out of that budget.

The argument was made by the government House leader, and I think it was exactly a week ago today when he said something to the effect of, "If a budget has to be presented here, and if your ruling is to be followed, then in effect there could never be an announcement such as a new hospital or whatever made outside of this House." What absolute nonsense.

A budget deals with over \$70 billion worth of expenditures. Many of these expenditures deal with salaries, with the ongoing programs that a ministry or government is involved in, but it also deals with a lot of the proposed capital expenditures that the government proposes for the next year. So any hospital announcement or school

announcement or any other major announcement is not in any way precluded by the budget. As a matter of fact, it is included in the budget; maybe not the actual place where the money is going to be expended, but this is the document, once approved in the House, that gives the government the authority to make those kinds of announcements. So to suggest that any major announcement like that is to be made in the House—even though I personally believe that the more major an announcement is, the more right it is to make it in this House, it doesn't preclude a government at all from making a hospital kind of announcement or any other kind of major project announcement outside of this House.

The other argument we heard from the Minister of Finance, I believe, also a week ago today or this past Monday, was to the effect of, "Well, you know, a budget is never presented for the first time in the House." Her argument is that since the media, opposition members and government members and their staff are involved in a lock-up, where they're given explanations as to what is in a budget, therefore the budget is presented there for the first time and not in the House. What utter nonsense.

You and I know that anybody who goes into a lock-up is basically there until the moment the budget is to be read in this House, until 4 o'clock on that particular day. They can only leave those lock-up rooms under the most unusual circumstances, in which case every bit of information they receive about the budget is to be left behind. As a matter of fact, when you go into a lock-up room, you are not to take in cell phones or any other devices at all.

So to somehow suggest that the lock-ups which have traditionally occurred here so that members, their staff, the media and the various organizations can be more knowledgeable about the budget rather than saying something immediately, on the spur of the moment, after a budget is first read here—it is purely in order to help that member, that organization or that media person to understand the budget. It is not in any way, shape or form to be taken outside of the lock-up room, so that certainly is in no way a presentation of the budget.

We didn't get to the actual motion that Mr Conway moved. The way I understand the rules, after a *prima facie* finding of contempt—and all that means is that you feel there may have been some contempt there and now it's up to the House to deal with that matter—our standing orders say, "All right, we now go to the member who has raised that issue and he makes a motion."

He could have at that point in time come up with all sorts of partisan motions in which the government was to be condemned for having dealt with the budget the way it did. There could have been all sorts of other stuff brought into it. What is the motion that he actually came up with? It is my submission that he came up with probably the most non-partisan statement I have heard in this House over the last eight years. His motion simply reads: "It's the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario." He doesn't slam the government. He



doesn't say anything that would make any government member feel that somehow—he doesn't even blame the government. He merely states that from now on, so that there's no mistake about it, any budget document that is presented should be presented here first.

I thought that when he presented it last Friday, it was a fait accompli. The Premier had already stated outside of the House on at least one occasion, if not more, that probably they were never going to do that kind of budget presentation again. So I can only assume from this that he agreed it was going to be done here. That's exactly what this motion says. It doesn't say anything more than that. It doesn't condemn the government. It just states that from now on, so there's no mistake about it, budgets will be presented here first. How could anybody in their right mind be against that? I, for the life of me, cannot understand it.

Is the suggestion now by government members, "Hey, wait a minute. We're going to do something else again. We're going to try it in the SkyDome next year or we're going to do it by television hookup"?

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**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation):** Great idea.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Somebody says, "Great idea." Well, fine. Now I get it.

I'm simply making the point that the motion that is before the House cannot be regarded by anyone, inside or outside this House, as a partisan motion. It is simple, straightforward and direct: budgets are first to be presented in the House, because the budget, after all, is the document that talks about the spending priorities of the government for that year.

What complicates the matter is the matter that was referred to yesterday and that's special warrants. I know that special warrants are necessary from time to time, and they have been used from time to time. Some of the government members gave these figures: a special warrant was used by a Conservative government on April 1, 1986, for \$7 billion, by a Liberal government in 1986-87 for \$6 billion and again by a Liberal government in 1987-88 for \$7 billion. I realize that with an election coming up and not knowing exactly what's going to happen or when the House is coming back, it's necessary to pay our bills, to make sure the hospitals are properly funded, that doctors get their money, that all the services out there—the teachers are paid, the school boards can function, etc; I totally understand it.

It's not the fact that a special warrant was issued in this case that's at issue. What's at issue here is the amount of the special warrant. We're not talking about a measure of \$6 billion or \$7 billion—I realize that with inflation you can up that by maybe \$3 billion or \$4 billion or \$5 billion. We're talking here about a special warrant for over \$36 billion, more than half of what the government intends to expend in the entire fiscal year—the total expenditure for this year, according to your budget document, is \$68 billion.

Some people might say, "Well, that's all right. What's the problem with that?" The problem with that, as was so eloquently pointed out by Mr Conway in this House on a couple of occasions now, is that the government is, in effect, a creature of this Assembly. The government is formed from the largest party that is here. The leader of that party, who becomes Premier, selects the 20 to 25 members of his or her cabinet, and they are the government. But they are accountable to this Legislative Assembly. To basically say to the people's representatives, which each and every one of us are, "We don't care. We are going to spend more than 55% to 60% of the total budget by way of a special warrant," I truly believe, is an abuse of process. I don't believe that special warrants were ever intended to sustain a government for up to six or seven months.

I won't even get into the fact that the special warrants are for different amounts for different ministries, and it just happens that there's a much higher percentage for some ministries that lend themselves to making beautiful election announcements. I won't get into that; let the media get into that. The point is simply this: from the documentation itself, when that special warrant was issued they expected they weren't going to be back here until at least October of this year, which is about six months into this fiscal year. Not to allow a Parliament, a Legislative Assembly, to hold a government accountable for that long a period of time makes us irrelevant and is an abuse of process. That is really what this debate over the last week has been all about.

I know some people are saying, "You shouldn't be talking about that." We've even heard some government members say we should be talking about more relevant legislation. All I say is, why the heck weren't we here six weeks before? We could have spoken about that from March 17 onward. I haven't seen the government side miss a turn at all. They're taking their opportunity to speak—usually nothing to do with this motion at all but talking about everything but, and I know the latitude of this House sort of allows that nowadays. I know, of course, the reason they don't want to talk about the motion is because they know they're wrong. I am absolutely convinced that the average member sitting on the other side knows they're wrong and that there's absolutely nothing wrong with the motion that's before us. That motion simply is that the budget be presented here first.

In the last minute and a half that I have left, I wasn't here during the Peterson years, but I think we do need to correct one thing: what happened to the public debt of this province during, let's say, the last 50 years. When Bill Davis left in 1985, the public debt of this province was about \$50 billion. When David Peterson left in 1990, he had added about \$9 billion to \$10 billion to the debt, to be followed by the NDP, which had added another \$40 billion to \$45 billion. Now they've added another \$20 billion.

So, the public debt of this province has been mainly as a result of Conservative governments—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Oh, oh.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Absolutely. You can ooh and ah all you want. I would suggest, sir, that you take a look at the various budget documents over the years and you will see that.

All I'm asking the members on the other side is to examine their conscience and take a look at the motion—the very simplicity of the motion—which merely states that the budget of the province of Ontario will be presented here first annually. How can you possibly be against it? The people of Ontario will ultimately be the judge of that.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** It's my second opportunity to speak on the motion put forward by Mr Conway and the amendments made by Mr Kormos and Mr Bisson in the NDP caucus.

I want to remind people that what we're talking about here is the motion put forward, which simply states that the budget should be given in this Legislature. That's what the Tory members across the way are being asked to support. Even their Premier has said—

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** Yes, it is. Chris, we've already had this argument, and I was right. It's very clear. The Speaker's ruling stands no matter which way we vote. That was his ruling.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** I'm not going to keep up this dialogue with the government House leader, because I know it's out of order. But what I want to say, in terms of my view of contempt toward this place, toward the people of Ontario and toward these members, was shown once again this morning in private members' business, when we had two bills before us to do with protecting human health and saving lives. One bill was Mr Gilchrist's, which we all supported, on organ donation. It's a very good bill. We supported second reading and even supported third reading without it going to committee, because we felt it was so important.

I too had a private member's bill this morning, for the fourth time—a bill that has been out to committee once since 1999 and once when we were in government, and indeed it's a life-saving bill. We now know that adoptees are not provided with health information. Many are dying and becoming ill because they do not have that information. I did get second reading and when I asked, as Mr Gilchrist did, for the same courtesy—and this is for a bill that has gone through this House on many occasions and has gone through committee, that is a life-saving bill—the government would not allow that bill to get third reading. I consider that contempt for democracy, contempt for the members in this House and contempt for, I believe, the 75% or more of the members in this House who support the bill and the 75% of Canadians who support moving forward on this bill. I believe that number will go up once they understand that it actually could save lives.

I also want to point out something else that has come to my attention since this morning. I received—there are lots of brown envelopes flying around these days—a very

interesting presentation-to-cabinet document dated March 12, 2003, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. You may wonder what would be the significance of a cabinet document. This is not a draft cabinet document; it is a cabinet document that is dated March 12 and has already been considered by cabinet. The interesting thing about this leaked cabinet document is that it is on the Nutrient Management Act and source protection.

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**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Who gave it to you?

**Ms Churley:** No, you didn't give me this. You've never given me a cabinet document.

The interesting thing about this document—I'm talking about contempt—is that this was dealt with on March 12, 2003, just nine days before the government announced it would be delaying the implementation of the regulations of the Nutrient Management Act. The document, however, clearly shows that the government never even had as an option implementing the nutrient management regulations early. It's clear from this document that the Conservatives wanted to wait at least 13 years to implement one of the Walkerton inquiry's key recommendations.

I want to remind you that we are now on the third anniversary of the tragedy in Walkerton, and we get a leaked cabinet document that shows the government was ready to put and is putting our drinking water at risk just to win votes in rural Ontario. This leaked document shows that Premier Ernie Eves may delay implementing the Nutrient Management Act until 2016, eight years later than the Conservatives previously promised. The act would set rules to protect drinking water from manure, as you are aware. The confidential cabinet document says that nutrient management is a key component of both Ontario's clean water strategy and the water protection approach envisioned by Justice O'Connor, but the document, this secret cabinet document, lays out plans to delay the act's key environmental objectives, because nutrient management is a very high profile and contentious issue in rural Ontario.

The NDP pointed out all along that the Nutrient Management Act didn't do what it was supposed to do and that there were major flaws with it, but at least it was something, at least it was a start toward protecting water sources from manure. One of our major criticisms of the bill was that the guts of the bill were in the regulations and we were concerned that there were no timelines. We feared that, as a result, the actual implementation of these timelines would never see the light of day.

What this document shows—talk about contempt—is that we were right all along. The cabinet document proves that the government has no intention of protecting drinking water. It makes it clear that this government is more concerned about being popular and getting re-elected than about doing the right thing. It shows the government was considering two options for implementation of the Nutrient Management Act: delaying until 2008, or delaying until 2016. On March 21 the government announced it was delaying the implementation for 97% of farms in Ontario until 2008 at the earliest.



It's bad enough that this government chose to delay the implementation until 2008. We were very worried at the time about what "at the earliest" meant. We weren't sure. The government never clarified. Now we know from this cabinet document exactly what they meant by "at the earliest." The cabinet document clearly shows they have no intention of implementing those regulations until 2016. That's 16 years after the tragedy in Walkerton and still there is no regulation of nutrients and not enough protection for our water.

This document is very interesting. It goes on to outline the problems this strategy might encounter, because they know there could be public relations problems in delaying until 2016, so what they said was 2008 or a later date. What is in this document is this: "General public may criticize OMAF's new on-farm inspection role as not consistent with the O'Connor report," and, "General public may accuse government of postponing a contentious issue until after a possible spring election."

That's what's in this document as a communications problem.

What have they done? The government is clearly more worried about how it might look to delay than what might happen if they delay. The major concern as outlined in this cabinet document is that it would be risky to say, "We're going to delay until 2016," so they say "2008 or at the earliest date."

We said that we couldn't trust this government to implement the regulations, and we were right all along. This document shows it. They have also brought forward a report on source protection, but there is no act and there is no draft. I will say to you, given what we are reading in this cabinet document, we will never see the light of day on the Nutrient Management Act.

Water in Ontario in general—because this is the anniversary of that situation, that terrible tragedy in Walkerton. Funding for water infrastructure is thus: in the 2001-02 budget, the government set aside \$200 million in municipal infrastructure projects, in OSTAR—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Hear, hear.

**Ms Churley:** —ah, but just wait—and the Millennium Partnerships initiatives. That money was set aside, but the numbers aren't broken down. Ministry officials confirm that over half of that money was intended for municipal water projects. You have to remember that this government got rid of the dedicated fund that the NDP had set aside for funding water infrastructure. So this money was to be shared for all kinds of other projects. But get this—are you ready for this?—only \$29 million of the \$200 million was actually spent. So I wouldn't cheer over there. The money was set aside but it wasn't spent. That left over \$100 million in budgeted money for municipal water projects unspent for that year, and this is after Walkerton and all of the promises that the government would come through and help municipalities fix up their water and sewer infrastructure.

We don't know what happened to the money. I've asked what happened to the money and neither the minister nor anybody else will tell me. But given this gov-

ernment's history, I'll tell you what I think. I can only assume that they reannounced this money as part of their 2002-03 budget commitments.

Let's review what those were. In the 2002-03 budget, the government promised to spend \$174 million on water projects in Ontario, again under the same two initiatives, the OSTAR and Millennium Partnerships initiative.

Of course, everybody knows how desperate municipalities are for infrastructure money to upgrade their water systems. So we have to assume that all of that money got spent, right? Well, you are wrong again if you thought that. The recent Magna budget shows that they only spent a third of that amount. Over \$110 million is still sitting in the bank, while pipes crumble and municipalities beg for help with municipal water projects. Over the past two years this government has failed to invest in the crumbling infrastructure in this province. They failed to spend over \$200 million in the last two years alone.

Now I'm going to tell you what the result of the failure to spend that money is. Our water system is in trouble. In September of last year, over 40% of our municipal water systems were out of compliance, and that's down from over 60% a year before.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** That's good, then.

**Ms Churley:** Oh yeah, the Minister of the Environment says it's good; it's only 40% out of compliance now. It was 60%; now it's down to 40%. After what happened in Walkerton, the minister seems to be satisfied with that. Sixty municipal drinking water systems in the province are out of compliance and have had to receive extensions on meeting the requirements because they can't access enough money to make the necessary repairs. So there you have 60 systems that desperately need to be fixed, and what does the government do? Instead of giving them the money they needed to upgrade their systems so that we wouldn't have another Walkerton, they gave them an extension on meeting the requirements of the new regulations.

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At any other time in Ontario there are dozens of municipal and local drinking water systems that have current boil-water notices. Right now, as we speak, we have boil-water orders clear across the province, and all that money has gone unspent. What happened to that money? Why isn't it being spent, given to the municipalities to upgrade their sewer and water infrastructure?

What have we got here? The government has delayed the implementation of the nutrient management regulations. They've left the door wide open for the potential contamination of water. A recently leaked government document, the one I referred to earlier, shows that the implementation of these rules will be delayed until 2016. Given this government's utter inability to make tough decisions and to protect our drinking water, we don't believe the government will implement the source protection framework either.

That's why, as an aside, I introduced my own source protection act to follow up on the Safe Drinking Water

Act that I introduced some time ago. I will be reintroducing that source protection act and hope we can debate it before the election is called.

I want to be very clear about this: we are not blaming the farmers for what happened in Walkerton. It's this government. They don't blame the farmers, but I'll tell you this: they sit there and laugh—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Oh, come on now.

**Ms Churley:** The Minister of the Environment is laughing cheerily along as we talk about the third anniversary of the tragedy in Walkerton—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I'm laughing at you, Marilyn.

**Ms Churley:** —and the fact that they haven't spent the money, that they have—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I'm laughing at you.

**Ms Churley:** —to spend on infrastructure, sewer and water—the minister is laughing at me. Let's get that on the record. The Minister of the Environment is laughing at me, the NDP critic for the environment, the critic, may I add, who was cited when Mr Harris was being questioned at the Walkerton inquiry. I sat there when the lawyer said to Mr Harris, "You know, Premier, there were four or five direct warnings given to you that your privatization of the labs and cuts could lead to tragedies." He cited two questions I had asked in this Legislature, one to the Premier and one to the then minister, Mr Sterling, very direct warnings about the privatization of the labs. So that was something—

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** The minister is getting quite defensive here, isn't he? The minister can laugh all he wants at me. That's his prerogative. If they had listened to me and others when they were warned earlier, perhaps Walkerton would not have happened.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Oh, like grandfathering the Koebels?

**Ms Churley:** I was saying if the government continues to try to blame everybody else for what happened in Walkerton instead of themselves, I do want to say that we have to support our farmers in their valuable role as stewards of the environment. That means establishing clear rules and providing resources to them to meet those rules.

One of the other things I point out that is mentioned here in this leaked cabinet document is concern about farmers needing resources to implement these regulations. The government passed the flawed Nutrient Management Act and said they'd do that. But they now have bungled the regulations, made them so onerous on farmers that the farmers quite rightly rebelled. So what does the government do? Because there is an election coming—and talk about contempt again.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Too onerous on farmers?

**Ms Churley:** Clearly, you should read your own cabinet documents.

What they do is go behind closed doors and come up with a strategy, because there's an election coming, to appease rural Ontario, where they want to get re-elected, and not give to the public their true intentions of their

action on nutrient management. It's very clear in this document that they were concerned about public reaction if they let it be known they were going to delay the implementation of this until 2016.

That, to me, is another form of contempt for the House, for the legislators, for the people of Ontario, for the farmers, for the environmentalists, all of those people, the public who drink the drinking water in rural Ontario, all of the public, by going behind closed doors and coming up with a document that justifies why these regulations have to be put off until 2016, and announcing to the public that they will be delayed until 2008 or a later date. Why didn't they just come out and tell people what their true intentions were? I find it absolutely astonishing that the government—and I'll say this on the third anniversary of the tragedy in Walkerton—went through a cabinet discussion and expressed concerns about public reaction and rural Ontario reaction and decided not to be forthright with the public about their intentions of delaying these regulations. That's exactly what we have here now.

Over the last couple of days, we have heard of other situations where the government tried to hide decisions from the public that once again were connected to an election. That's the matter of the order in council on the money that was put aside. We well know that when people went to see that particular document, where it should have been in sequence with all the other orders in council, it was no longer there, it was missing. Why was it missing? Because the government did this thinking there was going to be an election, but then they bungled the announcement of the budget so badly that they had to call off their plans to call an election. So they tried to hide the fact that they actually had a document, an order in council, that set aside \$36 billion. That's what we're talking about here today: a government that is getting desperate, getting ready for an election, with one thing after another going wrong, doing things behind closed doors and trying to hide it from this House and the public. That's wrong. I urge the government to support the motion that's before us. Let's do that and get on with the regular business of this Legislature.

**Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** It is a privilege and a pleasure—maybe the pleasure is not quite that great. I think it's rather an unfortunate matter that's being discussed as it relates to the issue before us today. I want to say that nothing could be further from the truth than to suggest that I would somehow be contemptuous or feel contempt for this great institution here. As I start my remarks, I want to assure you, especially you, Speaker, that I have absolutely no contempt, nor is there any suggestion that I would question the ruling that you made a number of days ago concerning this matter. I want to talk about that a little bit.

I remember quite a number of years ago, well before I was elected to this Legislature, I had the opportunity to be here for a meeting one evening. You will know that as you come into this great building, we have security at



every door that checks to make sure that you have the authority and the right to be here, particularly in the evening hours, and then you go about your business. Once you are in the building, you have the opportunity to go freely, because you've been approved to be here. That evening I was here quite a number of years ago, after the meeting I had the opportunity to sneak in and sit in the chair that you are sitting in, Speaker. I can remember sitting in that chair and suggesting to the individual who was with me that someday I would be able to tell my children and grandchildren that at one point in time I sat in the Speaker's chair of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. At that point, of course, I had absolutely no idea that someday I would have that great opportunity to be a member in this Legislative Assembly and be able to stand here and speak to you. That was one of the things I remember. I think it's very noteworthy that one could even aspire to ever being in that chair. I want to commend you for that, congratulate you and to say that I have nothing but the utmost respect for you and that position.

When I was elected, it was really humbling, coming into this Legislature the first time, to think that I had been picked by the people I represent in the great county of Oxford to represent their interests here in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—and again, nothing but the highest regard for the honour of being able to be here and respect for all those other members who are here representing their constituents.

**1500**

One of the things I noticed when I arrived at Queen's Park, having spent quite a number of years as a municipal councillor in the great county of Oxford, was that the decorum and the process here in the Legislative Assembly was just slightly different than it was on municipal council. On a municipal council, it was always understood that everyone had an opportunity to speak, and you only spoke when you had that opportunity. If one was to speak twice without it being your opportunity to speak, it was not unreasonable for the head of the council—in this case, the Speaker of the Legislature—to ask you to refrain from doing that or leave the room. There was no such thing as an accepted level of heckling on a municipal council. I found it rather strange as I arrived here that in this place it seemed that was an acceptable approach to how business was conducted.

I remember that partway through the first term here at Queen's Park, so I would say it would have been somewhere around 1996 or 1997, there was an election for Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and I know I was contacted by a number of the candidates who were running for that position. I did have that discussion with a number of the candidates: why it would be an acceptable thing to have people speaking and interrupting others while they had the opportunity to be recognized. It was suggested that the general practice in the Legislature had to allow for a certain amount of that because it was traditional and was the way this assembly had always run. At that point, I didn't necessarily agree with that. But again, it was accepted that that was the way it was supposed to be done.

I want to say that as you spend time here, it seems that because it is the natural practice, we all become part of that practice. If the Speaker had to speak to me now, I dare say it may not be the first time I was out of order; it may not be the first time he would have had to have done that. Because as you get here, there are times you tend to speak out when you shouldn't.

So I want to say, again, that's an acceptable level of activity, or it seems to be an acceptable level of activity. But at the same time, I do not see and would not expect that to be accepted beyond what happens because I would not want in any way to have my actions to be considered contempt.

I just want to speak very briefly to your ruling, Mr Speaker, as it relates to the events. First of all, the question, as I understood it—and again, I'm not trying to make your ruling—was whether, in fact, everything that had been done with the budget process was in order or was not in order and whether it was a breach of privilege in this Legislature. It seems quite evident from the reading of your decision that you quite clearly ruled that the approach which was taken by the government in delivering its budget was not out of order and was not a breach of parliamentary privilege for the members individually or for the Legislative Assembly collectively. Your ruling was in the negative; those two items had not happened. Where your ruling varies from that was that the issue of privilege was not necessarily always consistent with the issue of contempt; that in fact you could have contempt of the Legislature without breaching the Legislative Assembly's privilege or without breaching the individual members' privilege. Again, I understand that process.

You ruled, then, of course, at the end of your ruling—and I have it here. It talks about how the issue of contempt is really based on what society would consider contemptuous and how indeed the responsibility of the Speaker is to rule on whether there's a *prima facie* case for that and whether we should have the discussion in the Legislature and bring forward the opinion of the members of the Legislature as to whether they saw it that way, that your ruling is strictly based on there being enough grounds to have the debate.

The issue I want to get to: having been here for some time now, I know it's not appropriate for me to ask you to answer a question. I just put this out as my understanding of it.

It says here, "...I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do. As I have said, only the House, not the Speaker, can make a finding that there has been a contempt of the House.

"Before turning to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to move the appropriate motion...."

I guess that's where I have difficulty as to what we're discussing here. The appropriate motion would seem to me to apply to the issue at hand. It would seem to me that the motion we are debating here now, which is, "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the

Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario"—my problem with that is if that's the motion to deal with your ruling on contempt, I would wonder. I'm sure the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has thought this all out, and maybe rather than asking the Speaker, asking the member across the way would be productive.

My question would be that if there was no malice aforethought, if the budget was presented outside the Legislature for the reasons the government has put forward, that it was in the government's opinion a new way of presenting the budget to the people of Ontario, it is not out of order, a breach of privilege. As some have suggested, it's not a good idea, but the fact it's not a good idea is something that comes out after you have done it and seen that it's not, in the general view of the population, the appropriate way for that budget to be presented.

If that was the case—I just say this hypothetically—then would this motion deal with the question the Speaker has put forward in his ruling? At that point, I would say that maybe, from here on in, the Legislative Assembly should be receiving the budget first. That's a reasonable assumption if, hypothetically, those other issues were there. But that's not what the Speaker asked us to have the debate about. The Speaker asked us to debate whether the action was a contempt of the Legislature, not where the Legislature is going from here on in.

I have a problem in suggesting that if you wanted to go forward with a new direction, as you suggested in your ruling, Mr Speaker, if the government wanted to take something in a new direction or wanted to codify something different, in fact they could do that. My suggestion is that maybe the motion we have before us is codifying a process that hasn't been codified before, but it has nothing to do with the past action we're being asked to debate. I don't know how you can get a vote to say, "It was appropriate. It was not contemptuous." In fact at that point, as you ruled, Mr Speaker, you suggested your prima facie case was based on that after the fact it became clear that everyone, or a lot of people, were opposed to that approach, and that could make it contemptuous. That's why you decided to have a debate. I don't know how you can put those two together.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** You're not a Jesuit, are you, Ernie?

**Hon Mr Hardeman:** No.

I don't know how you could put the two together and come up with an answer to both in the same motion. I suppose, long after the fact, because we have debated this resolution for some time—

**Mr Conway:** And it is the resolution.

1510

**Hon Mr Hardeman:** I was really wondering—I guess my position would be that I don't know how I—I don't, but if I was supporting that resolution, I don't know how I could, in good conscience, being convinced that we did not act in contempt, vote for that resolution and not vote on the other resolution in the positive. I believe that the motion to deal with the issue the Speaker put is not being

dealt with in the motion that the member opposite has put on the floor. I just don't believe that you can do both at the same time. The suggestion of the member across the way may be a very good suggestion, but it does not deal with the issue we were asked by the Speaker to debate here.

**Mr Conway:** We are here to debate my motion.

**Hon Mr Hardeman:** The member opposite suggests, and I appreciate his learned abilities, that we are debating his motion. I guess I'm having a little trouble understanding how this motion was ruled in order when the Speaker asked for a motion to deal with his ruling, because I don't believe this motion deals with the ruling at all. That's my problem.

The reason I bring that up is I think it's also going to be my problem as to how I can vote on this issue because I don't believe you can do both at the same time. So I think that's going to be a real problem.

Also, having dealt with that, I think it's important to recognize that as we have spent a considerable length of time debating this issue—I shouldn't say "this issue." I guess I should say "these issues" because I believe there is more than one that we've been debating. In fact, as I've listened to the presentation, we've been talking about a lot of things other than the issue that the Speaker asked us to debate.

But I think the people of Ontario, and I know the people of Oxford, would have been better served to be talking about the things that would have been before us had this not been the issue of debate for the past week, such as the budget and what was included in the budget and the throne speech as to where the government envisions we should be going in the future. I just want to speak quickly about that.

I want to talk a little bit, first of all, about the comments from the previous speaker from the New Democrats. She was suggesting that there was some discrepancy with the figures on what was being spent on the OSTAR program, which is the assistance program for rural and small-town Ontario to help upgrade their water systems to meet the Ontario drinking water objectives. I just want to assure you that in fact all the money allocated for that is being spent on those water systems in the province. No municipality that has applied for funding to upgrade and meet the Ontario drinking water standards has not received approval for that application. I want to say that the only reason the money hasn't all flowed out yet is that many of these small communities needed to do engineering work and design work prior to being ready to actually implement the changes needed in their water system. That's why it is taking longer to actually do the payout for these applications than what had been originally hoped. But I can assure the member opposite that all of that money in the OSTAR program will be flowed to the municipalities to help them in upgrading their water systems.

I also want to say some of the things that I think are important in the throne speech and in the budget, as to where the province is going and what we think is very



important for the people of this province. I think it's important to recognize what is, I suppose, one of the major differences in where our government believes we should be going and how the opposition believes they would achieve the goals for the people of the province.

The number one issue, of course, is we believe that tax cuts create jobs and will create increased revenues, more people working, more people paying taxes and more revenues to provide the strong social services that people need, such as quality health care where and when our folks need it, quality education for our children and a cleaner and better environment—as clean and as good an environment as we can possibly get.

The opposition believes that you can do all those things, but there's no method of generating more revenue. Obviously, if you don't have the revenue, then you can't do all the things that people need. That's why we think it's so important.

There are some other things that I think are very important in the throne speech that I just wanted to highlight. We will introduce legislation to allow seniors to work beyond the age of 65.

Some people have suggested, "People don't want to work beyond 65. Obviously we're all waiting until we're 65 and then we can retire." Some members across the way are suggesting they might want to retire long before they're 65. I would like to suggest that if that's what they wish to do, they have every right, and should have every right, to do that, particularly if they have, like the member across the way, the resources to do that. Not many people I know can do that, but some can, and we appreciate that they can.

What I think is really important, and I know a lot of my people feel that way, is when they get to be 65, they don't believe it's appropriate that they have to quit working because they're 65. I think that's really what the legislation will be looking to do: to allow people, if they so wish, to carry on working, that they are not deprived of that right because they've gotten to be 65.

We also want to provide children with further assistance, particularly children with disabilities who reside at home. We want to increase support for the disabled community, the disability support program.

Yesterday in this Legislative Assembly we had Community Living Day. All those people, again, are on disability pension and they have been waiting a long time for an increase in that pension. We're looking forward to helping them out.

We also want to make sure that we have plans in place for increasing energy generation. We want to make sure the energy that is needed in this province is available at a price that people can afford.

We want to deal with the challenges in rural Ontario. Many things are different in rural Ontario from urban Ontario. I think it's very important that we put programming in place to make sure the services and the things that are available in urban Ontario are also available to our rural residents.

Just because I live in rural Ontario, that does not mean I don't need education for my children at the same level

and of the same quality as people who live in urban Ontario. Just because I live in rural Ontario, that does not mean I will not require the same health care as those in urban Ontario.

With that, I thank you very much for your time. We appreciate this opportunity to speak to the issue.

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** We've heard a lot of valid debate here on both sides of the House in terms of the impact of having this so-called budget given outside the House at the auto parts factory of Magna, what it really means to the Legislature and what it really means to the people of Ontario.

The way I look at it is that the people of Ontario, by electing us and by paying taxes to keep us here and to run the various ministries, have a lot of their money and their privileges at stake when they give us the authority to make these decisions on how to spend their money. That's what I think the root of the whole debate is: how do we spend their money; how do we regard their privileges and rights as citizens; do we ignore them; do we bypass them; do we do things in secret; do we do things in an open fashion?

So at the heart of this debate here, which I think is critically important for all Ontarians, is that this was a breach of faith with the people of Ontario. By in essence not putting forth their spending plan, which is what a budget is, for the year in a proper place, through a proper format, where it can be made public and held to account in an open fashion, this government made a decision to take the normal rules and break them. What they did was they brought this procedure behind closed doors into a manufactured—no pun intended—and artificial setting in an auto parts plant in Brampton at Magna. What they basically did was say that they weren't going to abide by the rules of the Legislature and the rules that the people of Ontario have been accustomed to seeing from this Parliament and the federal Parliament and Parliaments before them. So it's their money, it's their vote, it's their accountability that has been jeopardized by what this government has done.

**1520**

To compound what they did, they went ahead despite warnings and still had the budget outside the House. Then we found out this week that the day before the Magna auto parts budget was delivered in secret, this government wrote themselves a blank cheque for \$36 billion of the people's money, with no accountability, with no scrutiny whatsoever. Can you imagine, \$36 billion? This was part of the escapade known as the Magna auto parts budget. It's like going to your local bank, having two of your best friends co-sign a line of credit and getting the money out of the bank. That's what this government did. Premier Eves went to the treasury of the province of Ontario, had two of his colleagues, ministers Runciman and Ecker, co-sign a draft for \$36 billion into a basic slush fund that they could spend at will for the next six months, with no checks and balances. So not only would we in this House would have no ability to question or scrutinize it, but the people who have given

this money in good faith and will give this money in good faith in taxes had no way of knowing if this money was being spent right, if these expenditure plans were done according to the rules, according to any kind of guidelines.

So this was a premeditated attempt to bypass the people of Ontario, to circumvent the rules, and circumvent them like no other Canadian Parliament has ever done. And it wasn't by accident; it was by design, as we saw by the order in council, the special warrant for \$36 billion, the blank cheque given to Premier Eves to do with what he wanted.

I know members across the way have criticized the Speaker for his ruling, which was basically pretty simple. He said he's found enough evidence that rules were broken and, in breaking these rules, you brought a potential case of contempt for the Legislature and the people of Ontario on to yourselves. It's not what the Speaker has done; it's what you did to yourselves.

It's not just the Speaker or the members of the opposition who have condemned this breaking of the rules, who have condemned the auto parts budget. If you look at almost every newspaper representing communities big and small across Ontario, almost every one said the rules were broken and that what you did at the Magna auto parts plant was contemptuous and wrong.

I'll just read some of these for the record. The Bracebridge Examiner said Eves is "snubbing" the Legislature, and called his plan "a farce," and then went on to call his TV commercials "sleazy." The Brantford Expositor called Eves "desperate" and said, "he has sunk to a new low." The Burlington Post and Oakville Beaver agreed with Gary Carr, the Speaker, and noted that the Eves government has not sat a single day this year, whereas the federal Liberals have sat for 28 days. The Canadian Jewish News is disappointed in Eves and called his defence "a shallow trough" which reflects his "poor grasp" of his role as Premier.

The Chatham Daily News called the auto parts budget a "slick strategy." Chatham This Week compared Eves to Stockwell Day, calling his budget plans "stupid" and predicting Eves is walking "into political oblivion."

The Cornwall Standard Freeholder said Eves's plan "reeks of arrogance and contempt" and called the move "bizarre" and a "charade." In a follow-up editorial, the Standard Freeholder urged citizens to rise up in defence of democracy and wondered who will be paying for hall rentals for the Eves budget TV show.

The Guelph Mercury called the Eves's plan "wacky" and "hazardous." The Hamilton Spectator called Eves's strategy "offensive" and said it showed the "arrogance" of the Harris-Eves Tories. It said Eves must be "getting lousy advice" to act in this "heavy-handed way." It said the Tories appear "to be drifting" and "lacking any consistent theme other than retaining power." The Kingston Whig Standard called Eves "his royal slyness" and said Eves's plan is "an affront to democracy. It is nefarious. It is wrong."

Independent observer after independent observer across this province has gone further than what the Speaker said: this plan was nefarious; it was a backroom, secret way of circumventing the rules so they could spend taxpayers' money without any kind of scrutiny. They didn't want people in Ontario to know what they were doing with their money. They hid it from them, because they had a plan that had nothing to do with accountability. It was more a plan about how to use this \$36 billion as a slush fund they could manipulate to get re-elected at all cost. That's why it's been called nefarious, and nefarious I think it is. Not only is it contempt of this Legislature, as I've said; it's contempt for the people of Ontario who have put their trust in the Legislature through their votes, and it's their money that is being dealt with in this way.

The Lindsay Daily Post called Eves's plan an "abuse of power" that is "unforgivable." The London Free Press weighed in and said Eves was "degrading" the institution of Parliament. The Muskoka Advance said that if Eves doesn't want to be at Queen's Park, he should simply quit.

This House had not sat since December 12 last year. There were months and months to bring the budget into this House, but you know they didn't want to have the scrutiny and questions asked. They didn't want the people of Ontario to know how they were spending their money. They wanted to make it as difficult as possible to see. It wasn't just \$1 million or \$100 million or \$1,000 million; it was \$36 billion of secret spending, the way they wanted to spend it without anybody asking questions. That is where it's so contemptuous of the people of Ontario.

The people of Ontario should rise up every time they see a Conservative come to their door asking for a vote and say, "How dare you come and ask for a vote when you didn't ask me for a vote when you wanted to spend my money behind closed doors through that auto parts budget and through that secret warrant of \$36 billion you didn't want anybody to see?" That's the question that should be asked.

How can you trust a government that refused to come before people on the most core part of government: expenditure of funds that is done in an open, transparent, accountable fashion, as has been done for hundreds of years? They broke the rules. The Speaker, to his credit, had the backbone to stand up to the rule-breakers. Now the rule-breakers are trying to say they're not going to vote for the motion before us.

The motion before us by the member from Pembroke is such a plain and simple motion, which says that if you're going to have a budget, an expenditure plan, you bring it first to the Legislature. That's all it says. How they can do all these gymnastics about trying to avoid that simple process—people in the Mother of Parliaments in England must be laughing at us that we're even debating this. In Westminster, you can just imagine what they're saying: "You're debating whether or not to even bring the budget before the Legislature first? Is this



what's happened in Canada?" It's just a fundamental, basic, simple request that the motion asks for. Bring it in the open first. Bring it to account. Obviously the members across who broke the rules appear very adamant not to bring the budgets here first, because they found a better way, they think, by going outside of the scrutiny of the public of Ontario.

1530

We know how difficult is to get information from this government. A lot of people assume that information on expenditures is easy to get. It took us four years to get the details, and not all of the details, of the 407 contract. Here's a \$3-billion contract which gave a private consortium a public highway—for four years we couldn't get a copy of the contract—four years we couldn't get it.

Down at the city of Toronto, just down the street they've had a public inquiry because of a computer leasing contract called MFP. The contract ballooned from \$43 million to \$80 million, and they have a public inquiry to see how that happened.

For the last three years, we have asked this government to show us the same contracts with the same company, MFP. This government signed over \$500 million worth of contracts with that same leasing company. We can't get a hold of those contracts so that the people of Ontario can see whether they got value for their money in those contracts. We can't get that information.

I'm sure people in local municipalities and in businesses across Ontario think that's insane. They say, "You must be able to get that in the Legislature." They probably do not understand that it is almost impossible to get contracts or even expenditure orders. This \$36 billion, we could not get. In fact, the Premier himself blamed it on the bureaucrats and said, "They made me do it." He doesn't even have the backbone to say, "I made a mistake and maybe we shouldn't have done it." Or "It was Ms Ecker's fault," or whoever it was. To blame the people that are working here as civil servants for the \$36-billion bank draft—at least the member from Etobicoke Centre said that this is the type of procedure that sometimes happens. We could debate that. At least the member from Etobicoke Centre didn't blame some person who can't defend themselves.

I think it's appalling that the Premier of this province would blame a \$36-billion draft at the treasury of Ontario on people who work here; that somehow, he would want us to believe, they had the power to force this government to secretly spend \$36 billion. That's what the Premier is trying to lead us to believe. We know that is nothing but chicken feathers. It is something that doesn't make any sense, because an expenditure of \$36 billion is not something concocted by bureaucrats; it's something that was concocted by the geniuses who concocted the auto parts budget up there at Magna and concocted this whole strategy of a \$36-billion slush fund. They dreamed up this cute scheme of taking \$36 billion out of the treasury.

Money is so easy to get for this government, yet if you ask young families who have children with autism, who

try to get a little bit of money so they can have the IBI treatment for their autistic kids, they don't get a cent when the child turns six years of age.

I've got a school in a high-need area in my riding that wants \$15,000 for a summer program—\$15,000, not \$36 billion. They can't get it.

Look at hospitals crying for the hiring of more nurses. There's a hiring freeze on right now. Do you think Mrs Ecker or Minister Runciman could write a little draft to hire more nurses at the hospitals, maybe a little special warrant to get books in the schools or to fix some of the problems we have in our schools in this province and this city? Do you think they could write a little special warrant, maybe just \$1 million? We could ask Mrs Ecker and Mr Runciman for that \$1-million warrant to fix some toilets in our schools—no. But for an election slush fund, easily done.

Can you imagine? It only takes two people in this province to sign a bank draft for \$36 billion. Can you imagine if you had a company or a charitable association in Ontario where you could get two people to walk in and take out that kind of money? Never mind \$36 billion, can you imagine if they could walk away with \$36 million? There would be checks and balances there to stop that kind of chicanery from happening.

In Ontario, what's been proven is that this government has taken away the checks and balances, broken the rules and basically said, "We don't care whether the people ever see how we spend the dollars. We're going to do it in secret. We don't care that for a hundred years or 800 years or 1,000 years they've had a place for accountability called the Legislature; we're going to go outside the accountability. We're going to do it behind closed doors. We're going to circumvent and break the rules."

That's what they've decided to do. That's why the people of Ontario are enraged at what they've done. Thankfully, they've said it was wrong. It's a sort of sad indictment: in the history of democracy in England they remember Magna Carta in 1215, a great step toward democracy where they held the King to account. Here in Ontario, sad to say, we're going to be remembered for the Magna auto parts budget. Magna Carta in England, Magna auto parts budget. We're going to go down in history. We're going to go down in infamy; Mr Eves will, anyway.

**Hon Mr Klees:** I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I have mixed feelings as well, as we continue deliberations on what, on the surface, is actually a very straightforward motion by the honourable member Mr Conway that the budget should first be presented here. Quite frankly, I don't think there are too many people who could find fault with that particular motion. But I think we have to go somewhat deeper than the actual crafting of this motion to get to the heart of why we are in this debate.

I want to refer to what initially prompted this debate, and I refer to Hansard and the words of the Speaker, who rose in this place and referred to what Mr Conway was suggesting originally had taken place: "Mr Conway ...

rose on a question of privilege to indicate that the circumstances surrounding the presentation of the budget speech in a private facility in Brampton on March 27, 2003, a day on which the Legislature stood prorogued, amounted to a *prima facie* case of contempt of the House." That was the original issue at stake here.

1540

To now go on and carefully consider what the Speaker then did in taking a position on this or making his ruling on this—I think it's important for people to keep this in perspective. The Speaker, to his credit, took a great deal of time to review the various arguments that were then made before this House by Mr Conway, by the member from the NDP and by our good House leader, who on that day, I recall, put a very succinct argument forward that the Speaker should consider as he made his ruling.

Our House leader asked the Speaker—and I must say, I think what we have to keep in mind as well is that our House leader, who sat in the Speaker's chair for four years, is not someone who is unfamiliar with the rules of this place and certainly is not unfamiliar with how a Speaker should consider the issues before making a ruling. So it was from the position not only of House leader but I think also with those years of experience that Mr Stockwell then gave the Speaker what I believe was some very wise advice. He asked the Speaker to consider essentially three issues as he considered his deliberation.

The first was the issue of constitutionality around this, because that in fact had been raised by members opposite.

He asked the Speaker to consider the issue of the orders of this House. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence waxed eloquent about how the rules had been broken in this place. He went on from there and suggested that the Speaker had in fact ruled that the rules of this place had been broken—far from the truth; simply not the case at all. The fact of the matter is that when our House leader advised the Speaker that he must of course consider the orders under which we conduct business here, I think he did so because the people not only in the House here who are concerned that we do things according to the orders that we have, but also, and rightfully so, people who are observing us conduct ourselves in this place want to know that we're doing things according to the rules of procedure.

I believe the third or the fourth issue the Speaker was asked to consider, namely that of precedent—that too was extremely important for the Speaker to take into consideration.

I found it very interesting as the Speaker gave his ruling. The Speaker made it very clear that, first of all on the issue of constitutionality, he, as Speaker, cannot rule on that. It's not within his jurisdiction to do so. If in fact there was to be a ruling on the constitutionality, that would have to be left to the courts to decide. So on that case, the Speaker admitted very clearly he is not even in a position to make a ruling.

On to the next issue of the orders of this place, the rules under which we conduct ourselves and carry on

business: the Speaker went on again to indicate very clearly, after he had considered the rules, the standing orders of this Legislature, after expounding on the details of that, "What I am essentially saying, then, is that the 2003 budget process does not raise a matter of order." So there was no breaking of the rules of this place according to the Speaker.

**Mr Conway:** That's your interpretation.

**Hon Mr Klees:** That member opposite says, "That's your interpretation." I'm quoting from Hansard, and if that was not the word of the Speaker, then I think the Speaker has a responsibility to correct Hansard. But that is clearly what the Speaker indicated. For members opposite to suggest otherwise in this debate is, may I use the term, not being straightforward with the public who are listening to these debates with a great deal of interest.

The Speaker went on ultimately to suggest that—well, he made a ruling. I find this most interesting, and I'm quoting again from Hansard, "From where I stand, the 2003 budget process has raised too many questions for the House not to reflect on them." That's fair enough. It was the first time that something had been done that had never been done in that way before, although there were other budgets that were read outside the House and the Speaker referred to that, and agreed that in fact this was not the first time a budget speech had been read outside of this House, but the circumstances were unique. So, rightfully so, it raised questions, there was public debate and we should be discussing that. I think it's healthy. There's nothing wrong with that. But while we debate it, let's have the integrity at least to debate the facts and the issues as they really are, otherwise we in this House by our very debate would lead people astray in terms of what actually did take place and what the Speaker indicated.

The Speaker said, "I am finding that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do. As I have said"—and this is most interesting, folks; listen up—"only the House, not the Speaker, can make a finding that there has been a contempt of the House." At the end of the day, while the suggestion is being made by members opposite that the Speaker has found that there was contempt of the House, that is not the case. The Speaker himself admits that he cannot find the House in contempt, so he defers to the Legislature. We're here debating that issue. For members opposite to suggest that people sitting on the government side of the House don't have the right to disagree or vote their conscience on a matter that is before the House I suggest is being very inconsistent with the very arguments they're making that there should be freedom in this place, and freedom to speak their minds.

I have to admit—I think I've said this on a number of occasions in this House before—that I'm not impressed with this place on many occasions. I'm disappointed, as someone who came to this place in 1995 looking forward to participating in vigorous and meaningful debate on



issues of importance to my constituents and to people in this province, that all too often there is anything but not only reasonableness in this place, but very seldom do we actually have debate on issues that affect the policies that are tabled before the Legislature. I can't tell you the number of times members opposite rise in their place and talk at length about why they don't feel they have enough opportunity to deliberate on the issues. They'll take 20 minutes of their debating time to talk about why they don't have enough time to talk about the issues and never get to the point of the issue. I'm suggesting to you that we all have a responsibility here to ensure that in this place we in fact do what we have been sent here to do by our constituents, and that is to deal in a reasonable way with the public policy issues that are at hand.

1550

I found something very interesting that the Speaker said in his ruling: "Many Ontarians from all walks of life have complained in an overwhelmingly negative way—to my office,"—he's referring to the budget process—"to members directly, through various media, and to the government itself—that the government's approach to communicating the 2003 budget to Ontarians has undermined parliamentary institutions and processes."

He goes on to say, "I think Ontarians are rather fond of their traditional parliamentary institutions and parliamentary processes, and they want greater deference to be shown toward the traditional parliamentary forum in which ... policies are proposed, debated and voted on."

I suggest to you that I have had more calls to my office from people complaining about the decorum in this place during general debate and far more calls relating to the general decorum in this place than ever I received regarding the budget issue. So, to the Speaker's point, and I've suggested this to the Speaker before, it is the Speaker's role to keep order in this place. There's only one person who has the authority to keep this place in order and to keep the decorum at a level that it should be, and that is the Speaker.

I would suggest to you—I would challenge the Speaker—that if we really want to protect the integrity of this institution, then it's up to the Speaker to show that leadership, and it's up to the Speaker to ensure that when members are debating the points of policy at least we can understand and hear what's being debated. I can't tell you the number of times that I have stood and either tried to give a statement in the House or present a statement on a piece of legislation and not been able to hear myself, let alone anyone else—who obviously don't care about what's being said or they would listen up and then they'd actually have a basis on which to challenge the legislation that's being proposed.

We now have had some four years under the leadership of the Speaker of this House, and I have to say I'm disappointed that we have not seen any improvement in how business is conducted here. I take in all seriousness the Speaker's opinion, and he has a right to his opinion about what is right and what is wrong in this place, and to some degree we're chastised, because if it had in fact

been applauded by all people in this province, it would have been a winner. The fact that it has raised the kind of controversy that it has obviously means there are too many people—for my liking—who didn't like what happened. So I take the Speaker and his chastisement for what it is, and together we'll move on, and we'll ensure that in future we do things in a way that hopefully will not only respect this place but at the same time be reaching out to the people in this province to ensure that they are involved in that process.

My challenge to the Speaker today is to take very careful assessment of how you conduct your responsibilities in this House, and if it means that certain members are asked to leave because they're not prepared to acknowledge and respect the role of the Speaker and the conduct of this House, then so be it.

I think this is, and has raised, a very important issue for us all in this House. No one respects the traditions of Parliament more than I. No one respects the awesome responsibility we have as members of the Legislature more than I. I have to say that to be engaged in this debate is sobering for me. It is a debate I would have preferred we not have. But circumstances are what they are, and here we are. If there is something positive that comes out of this debate, perhaps it is that it has given all of us an opportunity to pause and ask ourselves, what is it about how we conduct ourselves in this place from day to day that not only respects the rules of this place but the traditions and the awesome responsibilities we have as lawmakers in Ontario, and that we do so out of respect, not only for the people who have sent us here, but for ourselves and for the institution.

Speaker, I close my remarks with an appeal to you as Speaker to take on your responsibility to ensure that that respect is held high from this point forward.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** I want to start by indicating my complete and utter confidence in the Speaker's ruling and the understanding that this ruling we are talking about—we're now debating the subsequent motion put forward by the honourable member Sean Conway, a 28-year veteran of this place. I know that he gains the respect of most members in this House on both sides, in terms of what he has brought to this place and to the province of Ontario.

I want to outline some things: to tell people a little bit about what I personally experienced when I first got here; to talk about what I believe my constituency and most of the people I've met in Ontario have talked to me about when they've found out that I am an MPP; to make some generic comments about what this House is all about; and to talk specifically about why I believe the Speaker's ruling was appropriate and why our response to it is as appropriate as the ruling itself.

Let me back up to the first part. When the Speaker made his ruling, there were some comments that had come out previous to that, when the speech first came out at Magna. They asked about the response, and then there was a furor across the province from scholars and the media, the people who watch this place, and in some



cases a lot of citizens of Ontario, indicating that not only did they believe there was an extreme uniqueness about presenting a budget outside this place, but wasn't it ironic that they had to prorogue the House first so they could say the House wasn't sitting?

In essence, they said, "If you had waited, you would have presented that budget in the House." We were supposed to come back on March 17, and you would indeed have presented that budget in this place. But before that budget was given, we had prorogation of the House, which pushed it back beyond the date.

Then they started to say, "Our excuse for doing that was because the House wasn't sitting, so we needed to do it somewhere." They also said, in terms of a line that was given, "Listen, it doesn't matter where; it's the content of the budget speech." That's what has been said and what is said to this moment.

What I find fascinating about that is that most of the people who are making that comment now have noticed a change in that direction. The Speaker's ruling came under fire because the Speaker had made comments about what was going on when the House wasn't sitting. In fact, I've spoken to sources who have made it quite clear to me that the Speaker's words that were used, as a result of the flames coming from the nostrils of some of our members on the other side that the Speaker was no longer impartial, were that he said the Premier wasn't fit to govern. Quite frankly, that was not said. My checking of the record indicated, as to whether or not the Speaker said that, that he did not say that. It was used as a vehicle to attack the Speaker and say that he shouldn't be saying things like that, that he's not allowed to say that.

1600

The innuendo that was created as a result made it so; because we said it enough, that's exactly what he said. I would challenge any member to go straight to the Speaker and ask that Speaker what exactly he said in order for them to remove the flame from their nostrils and maybe withdraw some of the attacks that were made on the Speaker during that time period.

That would be interesting to find out, because if there were any disappointment from the Speaker, if there were disappointment about this whole issue from the Speaker, I imagine it would be having words put into his mouth that were not said. I know that Speaker to be an honourable and fair-minded man who spent a tremendous amount of time on his ruling.

I would also reflect on the work of the Clerk, the office, the staff and the people who provide information and guidance to the Speaker, which is done, by the way. They went over and over the material to ensure that something as serious as this was done with proper homework, with as much information as possible, so that when the ruling was laid down, and as the member who was just speaking indicated, the words were chosen carefully.

When that's done, I don't have a complaint. I can live with what that reality is. Then we move on, which is why Sean Conway made that motion, to say, "You know

what? We got the message. The Speaker has made a ruling. He's given us the opportunity to make that change." The motion was put forward and now we debate whether or not we believe the budget should be put in this place from now on and debated in this place. I think that's a simple step, an opportunity for us to simply reaffirm this is the place for that. Quite frankly, it is the right thing to do.

I want to go back to what I said earlier about my own personal observations. When I approached the front doors to this place, I stopped for a moment, and when the doors were flung open, I actually got a little teary-eyed, because of the awesome responsibility I've been charged with. That responsibility is felt by every member in this place. That's not an assumption. Of the people I've met in this place, all 103, there isn't one who has not come here with that in their hearts. There isn't one person in this place who has not brought themselves here for the purpose of serving the people of Ontario. I would never doubt that. I don't question it. If anyone says it, I spend a lot of time trying to lift this place up, because that's what we should be doing, to regain the confidence that I believe has been lost to a certain degree.

When I walked into this place, I thought of this: there are over 11 million people in this province now, and there are 103 in this place. We in this place are 103 of 11 million people. We have decided that this is the place for us to start making some decisions about people's lives: their well-being, safety, security, health and education. What can we do to help in terms of municipalities, in terms of communities? One hundred and three out of 11 million: that is an awesome responsibility and an awesome honour. For those who have gone in the past, I know some of them, when I've spoken to previous members, recollect the same thing. They believed it was an extremely important thing for them and an awesome responsibility. Therefore, I bring with me when I walk into this place a tremendous respect.

I spent some time reading the book, the standing orders, because I believed it was our responsibility to understand what was supposed to happen. That's why I say to you that I believe the Speaker understood that awesome responsibility. In particular, and I would go up the ladder of importance, when we get to the Speaker's chair, that's the bastion of neutrality, of judgment and of making this a place for all elected members. Now what's happened during that time period, I'm sad to say, is that in some cases some people were sent out to make statements such as, "Oh, it's simply sour grapes." I heard that. "It's sour grapes that he didn't become a cabinet minister." "He's got an axe to grind because his brother didn't become the nominee in his riding." "He's simply disgruntled, and he's getting his last kick because he's not running again." When I heard those things, I wasn't offended by the people who said them; I was apologetic to the Speaker. I went to the Speaker and said, "I'm sorry that you had to put up with that. I truly am sorry that you had to put up with that." It's not very smart of me to make those kinds of statements and use them as a vehicle to try to make the Speaker's ruling any less important.



Now that I've explained to you what my responsibility is—I think that this place, the democratic place that we're talking about, is so important to us. One of the members opposite talked to us and gave a little lesson about—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Read that thing.

**Mr Levac:** Read this? OK. No, that's not important right now. You're sending me something—I want to indicate that I've been sent a news clipping of some of the words the Speaker apparently said, when I said earlier that he didn't say what he was accused of saying. It's interesting that the member wants to give me a news clipping and doesn't want to talk to the Speaker. Did you ask the Speaker? I guess you don't want to answer. You didn't ask the Speaker what he said. So ask the Speaker. Quite frankly, it's ironic that the member, with as much experience as he has, comes in and tries to throw me off topic. I'm glad he brought me back to it. My challenge is still the same: go to the Speaker and get what he said, not what was written in the press. Go to the Speaker and ask the Speaker what was said, because at that point, I'm telling you right now, you will begin to understand that the Speaker's credibility was questioned simply because of a thing that somebody else said that he said, and not him.

I was talking earlier about the member opposite on this side giving us a little lesson about Greek democracy. To her, I said that about three quarters of what she had to say was very important, and I appreciated the fact that she did some homework on that area and took some courses. Because the member decides at all times to say that the members of the opposition don't know what they're talking about, and they never do, and also said that it's time for them to learn something, and that this place is only as good as they make it, unfortunately that last part threw it right off and almost destroyed the credibility of what she had to tell us about her understanding of Greek democracy.

I wanted to come back to that because I think something else gets missed an awful lot in this place. I refer to it quite a bit. One of those I've referred to often in this place—and check my Hansard, please—is our First Nations people, who have taught us a tremendous amount about how to treat each other and our environment. One of the issues I bring up on a regular basis is the seven-generations belief that our Six Nations people bring us; that is, whatever you do today needs to fit for seven generations in front, so that what you do about our environment today needs to be thought of in terms of what it will be like seven generations from now. They believe that in terms of their environment, education, child rearing and everything else: you try to move it forward seven generations.

The other thing they taught us—an idea that we actually stole—in terms of our modern parliamentary democracy is just that: the dividing of Houses. Several hundred years ago they had already done that. They had already got to: how do we bring our debate to the table, and do so in a way that respects each of the areas they

represent, in one area called the Six Nations? They were able to pull this whole thing together. There was a Speaker, there were Houses and different clans that got together and were able to bring their differences and put them aside and give each person assignments of how to make their society even better. I would suggest to you that there's another avenue that we could be taking a look at: the lessons that we can learn from our Six Nations people.

Finally, I want to start talking about the new revelations that have taken place since this debate began. I want to say one thing very clearly from the outset: this is a fundamental discussion that we're having. This debate is necessary. This debate should go on as long as it needs to in order to ensure that each one of our members is provided the opportunity to ensure that the people they represent understand where they stand on democracy. If they believe, if they truly believe that it doesn't matter where that throne speech was held, or for that matter where the budget speech or any other activities are held, then I would suggest to you there is an appropriate way to do that so that the evolution and the fluidity of our democracy can continue to happen.

But it shouldn't be done by stealth, it shouldn't be done by trickery and it shouldn't be done by political expediency. It should be brought to this place and brought to the people to say, "Here's what we're thinking of doing. Let's look at this opportunity to say, 'Is this the way we want our democracy to evolve?'" We have an idea. We think we might be able to provide the throne speech somewhere else. Here's what we're proposing." Ask the people, "Let's go ahead and do it." Maybe the people would say, "You know what? Not a bad idea. Go ahead." But retro thinking?

1610

I would suggest to you very respectfully that the Speaker had it right, that Sean Conway had it right and that numerous speakers in this place had it right. They were saying the people do respect this place, because out of the 11 million people who live in this province, the 103 of us were sent here to do that work. The Speaker made it clear: there already was opportunity to do what you wanted to do, in this place, and to show respect it should have been done that way.

The Speaker said there was a *prima facie* case. Sean Conway said, "It was contemptuous. We want a ruling." We got the ruling and he said, "Now what do I do?" He could have taken another path. My colleague beside me knows where he could have gone. He could have made a motion that said, "Because these guys are bad guys and because they pulled a fast one and this and that"—he could have gone on with a motion that was extremely partisan, and that happens in this place from time to time and I'm not impressed, but he didn't.

The motion was very simple in nature. The Speaker said it was wrong and most of the people in the province said it was wrong, so the motion says, "From now on, what we want you to do is to do the budget speech here." Is that so much to ask? That's not a lot to ask. That's a

simple thing that the people of Ontario deserve. At least do it here. Then if you want to have a travelling road show and take it on the road, go ahead, because you will have provided the representatives of this place an opportunity to debate it, to discuss it, to try to point out where the flaws are, to try to explain how we might have done it differently. But it didn't happen that way. That's what I believe is happening in terms of the people's response to this. I believe there's an expectation that there should be enough debate on this issue.

Finally, the new revelation that took place is something I want to touch on. This new revelation is this \$36 billion, over 50% of the entire budget for the year, this special warrant. I'm not going to take the tack that some people have accused others of doing. I'm not going to accuse the government of anything that I believe wasn't a normal, standard procedure in the past, because special warrants are a standard procedure from time to time, appropriately placed for the government's transition at a time when they're not sitting to pay for the expenses it takes to run this province.

What's extraordinary about this is the timing. The extraordinary thing about this is the amount. The extraordinary thing about this is that these papers couldn't be found in a place where they should have been found.

The other thing I would comment on very quickly and very simply is that \$36 billion worth of spending was on a single piece of paper. That \$36 billion, one half of the entire expenditure for a year for this province, was on one single piece of paper. I can guess—and I would do this as a guess—that not an awful lot of information was set out on what that expenditure of \$36 billion was. If I had received and been able to secure a package of maybe 25 pages or 20 pages of information such as what I'm holding now, which is a budget discussion about how much money and how the money is going to be spent, I would probably have eliminated that concern.

But I will tell you that I am concerned about the process in this place. I want to read one thing before my time is up. As I said, I continue to look to the standing orders, which is our responsibility and the way we work. The member opposite talked about the decorum, and I've got to agree with him 100%. I think he knows I believe firmly in that, and I know there are other people in this place who believe we really need to step it up a notch. Here is what it says, and he may get a chuckle out of reading this, because I think he knows the rules. It's section 20. It says, "(a) Members shall remain in their places and refrain from interrupting the Speaker when he or she has risen to speak, make a ruling, or put a question to the House." That means absolute silence.

The second one is the real kicker: "(b) When a member is speaking, no other member shall interrupt such member, except on a question of order." Do you know what that really says? That really says: nothing, not a word, no heckling. I will say at one time or another all of us have done it, but there are quite a few members on both sides who have always remained silent during somebody speaking.

I would suggest that I agree with the member opposite in terms of the decorum. I am taking that message back to my constituency. In my maiden speech, I made the commitment that I would try to raise the decorum of this place as high as possible. You know what? In terms of this debate, I think it's time. This is an opportunity for all of us to go back and hear clearly what the people of Ontario are saying and to bring the message back to the Legislature that we are going to rise above it and do a better job for our constituency. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I am happy yet again to make a few comments on the record—and, more importantly, to the Conservative government now that they're here and they're listening. I'm sure—as to what I think are the problems they've got themselves into and how I think they can extricate themselves from the position they've put themselves in. I also want to talk a little bit about the Adams mine later. I think those two things are somewhat related because it shows an overall attitude that the government has when it comes to how it deals with legislative processes and what their responsibilities are as a government when it comes to how they make government operate.

First of all, what really bewilders me as I listened to the debate over the past few days is that the government just doesn't get it. They could have pulled themselves out of this problem a long time ago. They could have said, "Listen, we made a mistake. It's clear that the people of Ontario didn't want to have their budget read off-site, out of the Legislature, at a car plant in Brampton, and we admit we made a mistake." That would have been the right thing for them to have said a long time ago, they could have done that on Thursday of last week when Speaker Carr initially gave his ruling or they could choose to do it today.

I found it quite upsetting to see that the government has not wanted to accept any responsibility for their actions. The public, I think at one point, judges us based not only on what we say we are going to do but how we govern and how we choose to exercise our authority when we are government. If there's a backlash against this government at this point—and I don't believe government members for one second when they say they are getting tons of phone calls from the constituents in their riding saying, "Oh, it's all the opposition's fault," and they've done nothing wrong. I don't buy it. The public is a lot more shrewd than that. This whole thing doesn't meet the smell test. All they know from a visceral level is that you guys done wrong and you should basically move on by saying you've done wrong and get back to whatever it is that you guys want to do by way of a legislative agenda.

It has been very disappointing, because the reaction of the government so far has been quite dismal. The first reaction was to blame the Speaker. It's his fault. Somehow our Speaker, whom I think we all have respect for—at least we should have—it's his fault for having put the government in this mess in the first place. I look at John



O'Toole. I look at the Toronto Star and the comments that were made—I forget what the date was—just this week, where Mr O'Toole was saying it was all Gary Carr's fault and then getting mad at the opposition and flipping the finger at Mr Kormos here in our caucus and saying somehow the trouble they found themselves in was all his fault. I say, hang on a second, it is not the Speaker's fault. The Speaker is here to carry out a job. In this case, both my House leader and Mr Conway have asked the Speaker to rule as to whether the government made an error and was in contempt of the House when it presented the budget outside the House, and the Speaker has come back and said yes.

1620

You have to deal with that and you don't want to deal with it. I'm saying to you that you're judged by your ability to admit you're wrong and to move on. I think the public is saying on this one, "We don't understand all the details and we don't pretend to understand the constitutions and rules and conventions of the House. All we know is it was wrong. Why doesn't the government admit it was wrong and move on?"

Instead, a number of speakers have got up in this House and blamed the Speaker. I think that is really unfortunate. I've been on both sides of judgments by this Speaker and I've been in judgments where it hasn't worked to my advantage. I didn't get up and blame the Speaker. I said, "He disagrees. Move on." You don't drag it on for weeks on end. You have to accept that he's the arbiter of this House. We gave him our confidence when he was elected as Speaker to carry that out. I think it's rather unfortunate for you to go after the Speaker. I've been listening to Tory backbenchers in the halls around here in some conversations I've had with them and with Tory staffers where I'll see him as an ex-Tory who's got a vendetta against the Tory government. I'm saying, "Whoa. This is really getting bizarre."

I don't want to purport that all the Tories feel this way, because I think there are a couple of rational Tories over there who understand what the issue is. Clearly, when you look at what Mr O'Toole did in the House not too long ago, there are number of Tories who feel very strongly against Mr Carr, and I think that's wrong.

The second thing has been that to the degree the leader of your party, Mr Eves, has been unwilling to accept any responsibility, you have to ask yourself the question—I said this at the beginning of the debate—where was Ernie Eves's judgment when the whiz kids walked into his office and said, 'We're going to do a budget off-site.'? You can blame it on whoever you want, but in our system of government, as in all others, the leader—in this case the Premier of Ontario—is responsible for accepting the final decision. It was his responsibility. If it was bad advice, too bad. It was the Premier who said, "Let's go and do it."

I say to myself that it shows Ernie Eves exercised bad judgment in that decision. At the very least, he could have said he was sorry. But what really got to me was what we saw this morning and yesterday when the

special warrant issue was raised that indicated the government issued a warrant to get the power to spend half of the budget of next year as a way of being able to get the House to not return. In other words, they had no intention of having the House come back when they decided to do the budget outside the House. They gave themselves the authority to keep on paying the bills of Ontario for six months so they wouldn't have to call the House back, and would be able to call an election and not come back until next fall should they win a majority or a minority government.

Mr Eves's response was, "Oh, it's the bureaucrats' fault. They were just a little bit too conservative in their estimates of how long we needed to go. They wanted more time. It's all their fault."

I remember Harry S. Truman. He had a very important saying when he was President of the United States. He said, "The buck stops here." At the end of the day, I have to ask myself a very simple question. If Ernie Eves decides to blame the bureaucrats, it tells me one of two things: either he had no idea the bureaucrats were going to do it, at which point we're in trouble because it tells me our Premier is not on top of very fundamental, basic issues that his government has to deal with, or he knew and accepted it, at which point we've still got a problem. No matter how you cut it, either he didn't know and he should have known—what is Ernie doing at the switch; has he fallen asleep?—or he did know and allowed it to go forward, at which point we still have a problem because it means the Premier said one thing to the public and was doing something quite opposite when it came to his actions.

It's a real problem. I said at the beginning that this is a pervasive view within the government as we've seen them over the last eight years. What we see by way of this motion, and what we see by way of the reaction of the government, is that when you're found in contempt of the House, you don't want to admit you have a problem and you keep pushing on. It's a little bit like how you've dealt with everything up to now.

For example, we've been dealing with the Adams mine issue in this province for a number of years. When we were in government and when my good colleague Marilyn Churley was in government with me, we passed legislation that prevented the Adams mine from being started up in Kirkland Lake. We believed then, as we do now, that if you promote getting rid of garbage off-site it promotes an out-of-sight, out-of-mind reaction on the part of large municipalities like Toronto, and they will never deal with their garbage issue. We introduced legislation that said—

**Ms Churley:** It would contaminate the water, more importantly.

**Mr Bisson:** Yes. We can get into the environmental issue, but the political issue is that we wanted to make sure that cities like Toronto dealt with their issues by being able to reduce the amount of waste that they're putting into landfill sites. Promoting a big mine that was going to become a garbage dump and pollute everything

around it would be a way of shoving it out of sight, out of mind, and we would be no further ahead in the long run.

One of the first things this government did when it was elected in 1995 was to scrap the NDP legislation that would have prevented that mine from being built in Kirkland Lake. We know that from the beginning of 1995 this government has been a proponent of starting up the Adams mine. In fact we have the Minister of the Environment, the now House Leader, on record saying, "I'm quite open to the project and I think it should go forward." It's public knowledge.

**Ms Churley:** But Mike Harris was the key. Mike Harris was driving it.

**Mr Bisson:** That's exactly the thing. We have the Minister of the Environment, who we know is very much in favour of this project going forward, and we've got the former Premier, Mr Mike Harris, who has been the driving force, I would argue, who has been a strong proponent of being able to start up the Adams mine, along with a number of backbench Tories and now cabinet ministers within the Conservative government. You say to yourself, what contempt does the government have toward the people of northern Ontario when it comes to this project? They changed the law in order to circumvent the environmental assessment process so they can fast-track this project.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Fast-track?

**Mr Bisson:** Very much fast-track, to be able to skip outside, so that you didn't have to have a full environmental assessment done on the project, and you've got a government that we know has been a strong proponent of starting up that mine.

There are a number of people in the north, as there are down here in Toronto, who are really worried about what this government is trying to do in regard to the Adams mine. Ben Lefebvre, the candidate in Timiskaming-Cochrane, and myself went to the Ministry of Natural Resources offices in Kirkland Lake about a month ago because we were told by sources that the government was trying to facilitate, by way of MNR, the quick passage of a sale of land that is a buffer to the Adams mine to a Mr Cortellucci, who is now one of the major owners of the mine and a good friend of the Premier. We know he's good friends with the Premier. We know he's a large contributor to the Conservative Party.

**Ms Churley:** Almost a million dollars. Bigger than any bank.

**Mr Bisson:** Almost a million dollars to the Conservative Party, and all of a sudden we find out, by way of information that was given to me about a month and a half ago, that MNR was trying to facilitate quick passage of the sale of—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Why don't you ask a question?

**Mr Bisson:** We'll ask the question in this House if we ever get back to question period. That's another point.

I was told the government was trying to facilitate the quick passage of the sale of land that buffers the Adams mine. I say to myself, I know there's something going on here: I know Mike Harris is a big proponent of the

project, we know that Mr Cortellucci obviously has a big financial stake in the project and we know he gave almost a million to the Conservative Party and is trying to get this whole process fast-tracked by way of the sale of the land.

I've gone in and asked the ministry to give me some information on that particular sale, and their response was, "You have to FOI that. Give us \$5,000 and you can get all the information." We're going ahead with that to a degree and we're going to find out where that brings us.

Now it has come to our attention that a private investigator has been watching the characters of Mr Harris and Mr Cortellucci in order to see what these people do, if they know each other and if they're somehow connected in any way. It has come to our attention today, as it has to others, that there is a videotape that we have at NDP caucus services—if anybody wants it they're able to come and get it—that shows a couple of things. It shows that at the same timeline on a particular day, May 14, which happened to be yesterday, at 11:59 in the morning, we had a Mr Harris, who decided to go have lunch, I guess it was, at the Porta Bella restaurant, which is known to be owned by Mr Cortellucci. Mr Cortellucci is seen on the tape going inside the restaurant at the same time, and, we believe, Mr McGuinty, but Mr McGuinty—we need to take a look at the tape a little more closely.

1630

All I'm saying is this—I'm not accusing anybody of anything. Anybody can go for lunch. But you have to ask yourself the question: Why are Mr Harris, why are Mr Cortellucci and possibly Mr McGuinty, meeting yesterday at 12 o'clock in the afternoon in the building owned by Mr Cortellucci when we know it is the new headquarters of the Adams mine rail-haul project? They just happened to all drop into there at the same time? "Oh, I think I'll go for lunch today. Let me walk across the city of Toronto. Oh, Mike, what are you doing here?" "I don't know, Gord. What are you doing here?" "Oh, what are you doing here, Mr Cortellucci? I never thought you'd be here." It's kind of a coincidence.

I'm just saying—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Listen—hear what I've got to say. I'm just saying to myself, I don't know at the end of the day if anything happened there. I wasn't at the meeting. I don't know what they ordered for lunch. I don't know if they had a cup of coffee. I don't know if they ordered a bottle of wine. I don't know what they talked about, and I can't purport to know what they talked about. But I've got to ask myself a question. There's something a little bit strange. Why are three people who are—two for sure; the other we have to confirm, but at least Mr Cortellucci and Mr Harris meeting in Mr Cortellucci's building that is known to be the headquarters for the Adams rail-haul project, and possibly Mr McGuinty, if we're able to confirm that? Why are they coming together?

I'm saying to myself, there are a couple of questions that have to be asked and there are a couple of answers



that are needed. Number one is, what were they doing there together? I think the media has to ask those people that question and say, "Did you guys just happen to bump in together for lunch, where you decided that you were going to go out and have a coffee and a glass of wine and didn't know where to go that day and you just popped into the building and happened to see the other proponents there?"

**Ms Churley:** They think we hired a private detective.

**Mr Bisson:** They can think what they want. All I'm saying is that at the end of the day it's a little bit strange. Normally, when people call me for a meeting we get together, we meet somewhere, we sit down and we have a discussion. I just think it's interesting that those three people are coming together at a time when there are a couple of really important things happening. We know, and I know by what I've been told by sources, that there are a lot of nervous people within the bureaucracy about how this particular land sale deal is going. We know that—

**Ms Churley:** It's a fire sale.

**Mr Bisson:** It's a fire sale, which we can get into later. But there are a number of people in the bureaucracy who are saying, "We're not quite comfortable about how the sale of the buffer land around the Adams mine is going." They're not saying to me, "For sure there's been a law that's been broken," but they're feeling very much the pressure in order to get this thing dealt with. The sale of land is, what, \$22 an acre? I think that's what the final figure was. It's 10,000 acres of land being sold at about \$22 an acre. I think the total sale value is about \$45,000, which is way under value. So we know at this time there is a process in order to expedite the sale of this land to Mr Cortellucci and other interested parties who are trying to get this garbage dump started. All I know is at the end of the day we got the former Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, who we know is a proponent of the project, who I've got to believe is probably still—

**Ms Churley:** We want to know whether he's an investor or not.

**Mr Bisson:** Yes, I was coming to that.

We're asking ourselves the question: Why is Mike Harris meeting with Mr Cortellucci and possibly Mr McGuinty, if that can be seen clearly on the tape, basically getting together at what is the headquarters of the rail-haul project? We know that Mr Harris still has contact with the government. Are they talking about how to deal with the MNR sale of land? I don't know. Maybe; maybe not. But I think some questions have to be asked.

A couple of questions I have: Is Mr Harris now an investor in that project? I'd like to know. Is he? Is that why they were meeting? Is he trying to help out in the sale of the land, or the expedition of the sale of the land at MNR? At the end of the day, I don't know. They might have just been having coffee. They might have all—

**Hon Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member opposite has, for more than 10 minutes, not addressed the debate that's under discussion. I think his

remarks are regrettable, unfortunate and beneath the dignity of this place, and he should be brought to order to speak to the question before us.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** This is a point of order. The speaker will address the issue of the amendment to the amendment to the motion, I'm sure.

**Mr Bisson:** Certainly, Mr Speaker, it tells me two things in regard to the contempt motion. One is, the government doesn't like us talking about what I'm talking about in regard to the Porta Bella meeting yesterday. That's one of the things. Clearly, members of the government who have been speaking—

**Hon Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In all seriousness, this is a legitimate point of order. I brought it to your attention and you called the member to order and he's persisting in doing exactly what you brought him to order for. He should speak to the issue before the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is a fairly broad issue. I'm willing to give some latitude, but I'm listening to be sure the member will.

**Mr Bisson:** This is very much directly related to this contempt process. This government is prepared to use whatever rules and whatever power they have in order to be able to get their way, including trying to shut up a member in the House from speaking on what is a very public issue that is related to the issue of contempt. I argued at the beginning that this government over a period of eight years has used the full rule of the law and the power that they have to be able to affect—

**Ms Churley:** Because of this picture.

**Mr Bisson:** —exactly—to be able to affect the outcome of what they want.

**Hon Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This member is literally breaking the rules. She's holding up a photograph, with a Toronto Star reporter in the gallery. She's deliberately breaking the rules. She should be thrown out of this place for showing contempt for this place. Deliberately breaking the rules. She knows it and she should be ashamed of herself. Disgraceful.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is a point of order. I would ask the member to bring herself to order, please.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, bring himself to order.

Further debate?

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just ask unanimous consent to give me a minute to finish what I had to say, considering I lost all of my time to these points of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Am I to understand that a point of order is no longer a point of order?

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** Speaking to a motion of contempt in this House is an interesting process. Many members have been here for many years and have never had the opportunity to address such a motion.

Democracy, as we all know, is a very fragile form of government. It is very open, and because it has that openness, perhaps of its being so fragile, many areas of the world don't have democracy. It's a scary thing. So having the ability to bring a motion of contempt to the House is probably a good thing, and it's a very serious question.

I have a couple of problems surrounding this particular motion. In 1988, as has been discussed here before, the budget was presented outside of this place, and again in 1993 by the NDP government. Major pieces of budget legislation, such as the social contract, which the NDP brought in in 1993, I believe, were presented outside this House. Somehow, in this particular case, what is good for the goose is not good for the gander.

1640

Contempt, in many people's minds, has reference to disrespect that's brought upon this House, and that makes this a very serious business indeed. This motion was brought forward by the official opposition, and it was not too many years ago that one of their members actually urinated inside this chamber. If you talk about disrespect for this chamber, I would say that would be the height of disrespect for the way we conduct ourselves and spend Ontario taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. That would be another area in which some members of this House show a tremendous disrespect.

For instance, the leader of the opposition flies first class to Ottawa while his limo driver drives down the 401 to meet him. That is disrespect for Ontario taxpayers' money, and this man wants to run the government. Contempt for taxpayers' dollars is what we see across the floor.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Chudleigh:** The member suggests this is a frivolous matter. A first-class ticket to Ottawa, which runs well over \$1,000, as opposed to an economy-class ticket, which I believe is in the \$600 range, and aside from that, his government-supplied limousine drives down the highway to the same destination: is that not huge disrespect for taxpayers' hard-earned dollars? I've been in this place for eight years, but I still remember what it's like to have a 9-to-5 job and how hard you have to work to make a buck to feed your family. Your leader has forgotten that.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Chudleigh:** Your mirth tells me that you've forgotten it too, and you've been here far less time than I have. How soon they forget. Typically Liberal: "What is good for us is not good for the rest of the country." You are the ones who have no respect for this place. You are the ones who stand in contempt of this House.

We shouldn't be debating this at all. We should have moved on. We have before us a budget, a very important budget. It's a great budget that has been presented to the people of Ontario and that has been presented in this House. It sits on the order paper awaiting debate. It's a budget that will eliminate surtax for people who are making less than \$75,000 a year. People are working

hard. Taking surtax off their commitment to the province of Ontario would assist those people. But we're not debating that today.

That budget also introduces measures that would benefit seniors, families with disabilities and the people who give them care day in and day out. That's what that budget would do, but we're not debating that budget. That budget would also support seniors and caregivers by providing a property tax rebate for their 2004 educational taxes, directly to seniors who own or rent. That rebate would average \$475 per household.

The budget that was introduced was on the same principles we as a party had in 1995: consultation and tax cuts. This type of budget has created over 1.1 million new jobs in Ontario.

*Applause.*

**Mr Chudleigh:** Thank you. I needed the break.

The interesting thing about 1.1 million new jobs is that it also creates 1.1 million new taxpayers. That tax revenue that has come into the government of Ontario equates to 16 billion new dollars, \$10 billion of which has gone into health care, to fund health care at levels far beyond what has ever been contemplated in this province before.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Chudleigh:** Oh, the Liberals are going to cut taxes.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Chudleigh:** They're going to cut expenditures. They're going to destroy what we have had in Ontario, because they're going to raise taxes. It'll be a long day before you ever see another tax cut in this province with a Liberal at the head of this government.

The budget that was introduced also is the fifth balanced budget in a row. Five balanced budgets in a row; it hasn't happened since 1908. In 1908, it happened. That was the fifth balanced budget in a row, in 1908, when the budget of Ontario was \$8.5 million.

The budget will also introduce a \$1-billion fund to help fight breast cancer and prostate cancer; but we're not debating that. Over a 10-year period, that money will go a long way. Many people in this field of study suggest that within the next 10 years breast cancer and prostate cancer will be cured or controlled, and we can hasten that. We can hasten that cure or control of those two most deadly cancers by talking about this budget, by passing this budget and getting that money into the system to make that happen and to make it happen quickly.

This budget was developed through pre-budget consultations with hospitals, school boards and colleges and universities. All of these places, all of these transfer partners of ours, confirmed that we need multi-year-based funding in order to help them plan better. In response, the 2003 budget—which we are not debating today—begins the process of announcing multi-year-based funding and targets these sectors, as promised in the 2002 budget.

When you think about it, if you're managing a hospital, a school board, a college or a university, and you



don't find out what your yearly allocation is going to be until you're two or three months into your fiscal year, what kind of planning process can you look forward to in the future? I would say none. But that's the way these organizations have been funded for many years.

When our Premier was the Minister of Finance in this place, he constantly talked about moving the budget forward to a point where it would give our transfer partners an opportunity to plan in the future—first, to introduce the budget prior to the start of the fiscal year; and second, to introduce multi-year funding so they would have some clue as to where they could go in the future and how they could orchestrate those funds to get more, to do better for less—and this budget, when it's debated in this place and when it is passed in this place, will do exactly that.

Since 1995, Ontario has created 1.1 million new net jobs. Have I mentioned that before? I want you folks to understand that there have been 1.1 million new jobs. Job growth continues to be very robust, and tax cuts have been part and parcel of the success of that rapid job growth. A key component of our plan to encourage more economic growth in the future is lower taxes, and so this budget will continue to lower taxes for individual Ontario taxpayers, to lower taxes for small businesses, to lower taxes in every facet of Ontario's economy. That will keep our economy strong, it will keep our job growth coming, and it will continue to put Ontario at the forefront of the communities and jurisdictions in North America and indeed the world.

1650

Through successive budgets, our government has put in place a sustained, multi-year tax reduction plan to return Ontario to growth and prosperity. This plan is working. It's working because our economy is outperforming our neighbours': our North American neighbours and our worldwide neighbours. It is continuing to lead the world in growth. We are leading the G7 in growth. We're looking forward to continuing that into the future.

This year's budget—the one we're not debating—the budget that will continue to build on the 1.1 million new jobs, the budget that will be the fifth consecutive balanced budget, on its way to the sixth and seventh—

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's my understanding that cellphones and BlackBerries aren't allowed in the chamber. Please correct me if I'm wrong. I think that's a breach of the decorum. I'm just asking for your ruling.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is a point of order. If it's an electronic device, the Sergeant at Arms will keep it. Personally, I would rather there be a large anvil in the basement and a sledgehammer, and that that was the way they—that is not it. Please. The Chair recognizes the member for Halton.

**Mr Chudleigh:** We're debating the motion on contempt. It's too bad, because we should be talking about the budget, a budget that is going to bring economic prosperity to Ontario. This budget, the one we have introduced in this House, is going to be—

**Mr Caplan:** When was it introduced?

**Mr Chudleigh:** About a week ago. The Minister of Finance stood up. She read the introduction to it. The papers have been filed with the Clerk. It's going to be debated as soon as this debate is finished.

**Mr Caplan:** When?

**Mr Chudleigh:** When? Good idea. We'll go back to question period, if you like. It's your motion. You can bring it to a vote, I would say, as you see fit. That's where we could go.

But that budget, when it is introduced, will complete a further 20% reduction in the tax rate for Ontarians. In our first term of office, from 1995 to 1999, we reduced the tax rate in Ontario by over 30%. In our second term of office, as promised during the campaign—in 1999 we promised to reduce taxes by 20%, and, as is our habit, being Conservatives, we kept our promise: we have reduced taxes by an additional 20%, that being completed by January 1, 2004. So Ontarians are now paying a little over half the tax rate that they were paying when we were first elected in 1995.

Corporate tax rates have also been reduced. And tax rates on small businesses, businesses with fewer than 100 employees, were 8% when we were elected, and by January 2004 they will be reduced to 4%, half the rate they were when we were first elected. You know, those small businesses in Ontario are the backbone of Ontario's industry. Fully 82% of the employment in this province falls into small business employment. A government that looks after small business will do well in looking after the province of Ontario.

Not only are we looking after taxpayers and not only are we looking after small businesses, but we're looking after those people who need our help. We've introduced measures that will benefit families with seniors and people with disabilities. They're getting some recognition of the work they do looking after their seniors at home. The time they spend being caregivers is being recognized in this budget. We're also recognizing that seniors want to stay in their homes, and we're helping them do that. We are rebating to them the educational portion of their property taxes. That will amount to about \$475 per senior. Whether they live in their own home or whether they're a tenant, that will be directly rebated to them.

**Ms Mushinski:** And the Liberals will vote against it.

**Mr Chudleigh:** And the Liberals will probably vote against it. It's sad.

Caregivers and the disabled will receive an increase in their annual tax credits of approximately \$300 if we ever get to debate this budget, a very important budget for the people of Ontario.

Since 1995, we've pursued a plan that will place Ontario on a path of growth and prosperity. As I mentioned, that path to prosperity has created the fastest job growth rate in Ontario's history. Did I mention that the private sector has increased the number of new jobs in Ontario since 1995 by 1.1 million? I may have mentioned that before. More than 80% of those jobs are full-time.

As we continue to invest in the future of this province, the jobs we will create will become better jobs. When we

were first elected in 1995, people wanted jobs. As we proceed through a more robust economy, as we have more jobs in our communities, people don't just want a job, they want a better job. The policies we're putting in place will create those better jobs. Employment growth over the next few years will continue to increase, productivity will continue to increase, but most importantly, it is estimated that take-home pay will increase by 3.5% this year and 4.5% next year with the solid Conservative principles put in place by this budget and this government.

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston):** I am very delighted to be a part of this debate. I think it's one of the most significant debates we've had in this House for as long as I can remember. I can tell you that I've been here, well, too long for me to go back that far, but let me simply say that this is unquestionably unprecedented in terms of the time I have been a member of this House.

We are debating a finding of a *prima facie* case of contempt by the Speaker and a motion that was put forward by my esteemed colleague Mr Conway. I'm going to read his motion; I think it's important to remember what we're debating: "That this House declares that it is the undoubted right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

Before I get into the root of what the Speaker has decided, I want to comment on some of the remarks made by previous speakers on the government side. I think it's important to recognize that speaker after speaker on the government side has questioned the validity of this debate, questioned the very reason why members on this side of the House want to continue to debate this motion, to debate whether in fact there is a *prima facie* case. The mere fact that this debate is taking place is what they're questioning.

1700

I find it absolutely ridiculous that members on that side of the House would even question such a finding. The evidence is clear. The fact is that all members of the House should be extremely concerned about their rights and privileges and about the right of Parliament, first and foremost, to hear a budget document in this Parliament assembled. Parliament is supreme and ought to be that way.

In fact, the backbenchers on the government side ought to be champions of that cause. The reason the government finds itself in difficulty today, I'm beginning to understand, is precisely because the government backbenchers have had little to say about the way this government does business. They are not concerned about the fact that the executive branch of the government—the cabinet and the Premier—have launched an all-out assault on the rights and privileges of this Legislative Assembly.

We are, after all, the legislative branch of government. Let us not forget that. The executive branch of government proposes laws. The executive branch has a preponderance of power. It is the job of this Legislative

Assembly to place some checks on that, and the first line of defence is for the government to make available to members of this Legislative Assembly documents—the budget document, at the very least—so that the executive branch will be accountable to the people of this province. That's how our government works—representative democracy. No supply is granted by this House until there is a debate. There's a very good reason for that.

But I say to the members of the backbench on the government side: you have, in many respects, allowed this to happen by not demanding of your own executive—of course, we are here to bring about scrutiny and accountability. We do that by very definition. We are in opposition. We oppose. But you on the government backbenches—and I say this with all due respect to the members of the backbench—have a duty and an obligation to demand of your executive that they be accountable to this Legislative Assembly, first and foremost. When you failed in that responsibility, you caused yourself enormous grief.

There is a creeping growth of executive power in our government, in our parliamentary democracy, in this House in particular. It has happened over the years. The executive branch of the government—the Premier and the cabinet—has grown stronger and has unlimited powers to make laws and bring laws to this assembly, but they need to bring those laws to this assembly to validate them, to make them laws. But when you propose a budget, which requires budget bills to be introduced in this House to validate a budget, when you do that outside the House, you not only deny the rights and the privileges of the members of this House but, more importantly, you deny the right of the people of this province to have a say, to have the government be accountable to them. That is very fundamental.

I say to the backbench, you should have questioned the government's initiative. You shouldn't just do this to secure favour with the executive. That's just unacceptable. The more you do that, the more powerful the executive branch becomes. This has happened throughout the years, but to a far greater and more worrisome extent by this government; a greater degree of executive control, executive power—unchecked, unlimited. It is a very dangerous precedent. I say to every backbencher in this government: you're going to have to go out there on the hustings to explain yourselves. You're going to have to go out there to your constituents and explain to them why you had no concerns about the government introducing a budget outside of this Parliament, outside of this Legislative Assembly. I think that's a very big cause for concern. If I were one of the backbenchers on the government side, I'd be very concerned about that.

I don't think you have a good explanation for your constituents. I don't think it's good enough to say, "Well, we should be debating the budget. We should be debating substantive matters rather than having this debate about fundamental rights and the accountability of government to the people of this province." That's what we're here to debate today.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Put the question.



**Mr Cordiano:** You put the question. Call an election. Where is the Premier, by the way, all week? Why don't you ask him why he isn't having an election campaign, why he isn't calling one?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You call the election.

**Mr Cordiano:** Actually, we'll ask the House leader of the government side. He speaks on behalf of the government. He has enough power over there. He's part of the cabinet, part of the executive branch, part of that encroachment of power on this Legislative Assembly.

When you take the right and the ability of this House to scrutinize government documents, particularly an important document like a budget, away from this House, then you have denied democracy in this province. You have done that. You failed to bring the budget before this assembly to have it read as a first measure, as a step, and that was done intentionally.

I think speaker after speaker on our side has proven that it was the intent of the government to do that, to avoid coming before this assembly to be accountable and to be scrutinized. That's what governments must do in this Legislative Assembly.

I want to go to the Speaker's finding. It's important to revisit what he has said very clearly. He continues to say, I think to this day, that he has no right to pass judgment upon what this government has done. Only the House and the members of this assembly have the unfettered right to debate this matter and to determine what is to be done about it.

I want to quote the Speaker. He says, "I also want to remind members that the authority to decide whether or not there is a contempt of the House resides with the House, not with the Speaker." And he quotes Maingot, who is an authority on the matter:

"While the Speaker may find that a *prima facie* case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish for contempt."

My esteemed colleague Mr Conway has put forward a motion. He is not admonishing the government; he is simply attempting to reassert the authority of this House that a budget must first and foremost be read in this Legislative Assembly before it is read anywhere else.

Parliament has the undisputed right to hear a budget in this Legislative Assembly. It is a very important concept that, as I say, the members on the backbench of the government don't quite get, don't understand. It follows through—and I've seen this erosion over the years in this assembly. Repeatedly the backbench has not stood up to the executive branch, has not done that, particularly during the years of this Conservative administration. You have withdrawn from that responsibility to ensure that this assembly is the place where we have rightful debate, that you can disagree with your own executive, that you can do so by debating in this House, you can do so on committees of this House.

1710

I want to say about that that we have essentially eroded the opportunities members have to assert them-

selves and thus to speak on behalf of their constituents in an informed fashion about the debates that are taking place, about the very critical issues we debate in this House and the issues we don't debate in this House. As I recall, there have been very few select committees of this House that have been created to deal with important matters. When I first started as a member, we had all sorts of select committees to deal with important questions of the day that we felt needed further examination by committees. There have been a few, admittedly, but not very many.

I say to members, this House is not functioning in the way it should. The committees of this assembly need reform. The opportunities for backbenchers must be enhanced in the future if we are to ensure we have a vibrant democracy in this assembly. I would say that speaks to the cynicism that now exists among all people in our political system. The cynicism stems from the fact that members I don't think have the opportunity to truly reflect what their constituents are saying, through various vehicles of this assembly. Perhaps it's time to find a way to do that. That is essentially a critical question that all members of the House ought to address and ought to think about in the future.

It is contemptuous as well that the government would attempt to operate for a period of perhaps six months—I can only assume that's what the government had in mind—when they issued a special warrant, which of all things they blame bureaucrats for. It is preposterous to blame the bureaucrats for an executive decision that was made by the Premier and his cabinet of this province to issue a special warrant to allow the government to operate—\$36 billion, which amounts to just a little more than 50% of the operating budget of this government. It is preposterous to blame the bureaucrats for bringing forward a special warrant.

Yes, special warrants have been used in the past, but never of this magnitude, of this order—more than 50% of the provincial budget. That meant only one thing: the government had no intention of coming back to the Legislative Assembly with a budget to be read or to be debated in the Legislative Assembly. It meant the government fully intended to go to an election campaign, and they were going to use that \$36 billion as an election spending free-for-all. That's the intent the government had when they issued those special warrants.

This was done in secrecy. This was not done with full disclosure to the Legislative Assembly, where the government comes to account for its expenditures; this was done behind closed doors. That's the state of affairs in the Ontario political landscape. We've reached the point where we have government by executive fiat, without any scrutiny by this Parliament. Oh, yes, we go through the motions, but when a government gets to the point where it can read a budget outside this Legislative Assembly and then decide to issue a special warrant to continue with its expenditure program and not come before this Legislative Assembly to be accountable for its expenditures, then we've reached the state of affairs

where we have government by executive decree, by executive fiat. It is shameful that we've reached this state of affairs.

I say to the backbenchers on the government side that it is without question your duty to challenge the executive branch of your government, to make certain—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Cordiano:** Well, we wear both hats. Some members on that side wear both hats. They're part of the executive branch and they're part of the legislative branch. The members on the backbench who don't have any other extraordinary parliamentary duties as parliamentary assistants are legislative members of this assembly, like the opposition members are. They have no executive duties. They should defend the rights of this assembly. They should defend the rights for the people of this province to have laid before them some measure of accountability for an expenditure of an enormous sum, \$36 billion, which—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** They do. It's called supply.

**Mr Cordiano:** It's not called supply. You did not put before this House a budgetary plan. You can do that six months after the fact and ask for supply? What a joke. There is no accountability in that process. Six months after you've spent the money you ask for supply. Sure, that in effect constitutes the measures we take around here, but under normal circumstances a budget is read in this assembly before all that takes place and therefore there is accountability, there is an opportunity for members of the opposition and, I would argue, members of the government backbench who are not privy to executive meetings of the government, who are not privy to information that the cabinet alone has. They also have the right to know how the government plans to spend its money on behalf of the people of this province.

I want to turn my attention in the couple of minutes that remain to an interesting poll that was conducted in the Minister of Finance's own riding. This poll appeared in the Ajax Pickering News Advertiser and the Uxbridge Times; 487 people answered the poll. The question in the poll read this way, "Do you agree with the Conservatives breaking from tradition and introducing the Ontario budget outside the Legislature?" An overwhelming number, 91% of those polled, said, "No, we don't agree with the Conservatives breaking with tradition." That was in the Minister of Finance's own riding.

Many people in her riding are calling for her resignation because of that, calling for her resignation because of the special-warrant spending, her mishandling of the budget. Many people in her own riding who have supported her in the past have called for her resignation, and I think the Minister of Finance should be responsible, first and foremost among her executive colleagues, for the debacle that the budget was for this government, along with her colleagues.

That's an interesting poll, that 91% of the people in her riding did not agree with the presentation of the budget outside of this Legislative Assembly, and I think the Minister of Finance has been rattled by what has

happened here. She appears to be out of sorts, and I think it's a question as to whether she has control of her own ministry at this point in terms of following the edict that was laid out respecting a special warrant to continue expenditures without being accountable for them. It's an interesting fact, and I say again that many people in her riding call for the Minister of Finance to resign. I think she should consider it.

**Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing):** It's a pleasure to stand in my place and join in the debate today as we talk about respect and decorum and tradition of this Legislature.

I first want to say that there is an MP by the name of John Richardson who spent most of his life in public service. He retired from the armed forces as a brigadier general. He was the former head of the reserves before being elected into the Legislature in 1993. Here's an individual who has served his country, served his constituents, served his riding, served very well. Unfortunately the Prime Minister blamed the by-election defeat on him because he perhaps waited too long to retire.

Mr Richardson, I'd just like to say thank you for your years of service. Thank you for representing our country. Thank you for the sacrifice you made on behalf of your constituents. On behalf of all constituents of Canada, thank you, and just know that we appreciate what you've done and that you have served. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister wanted to put blame on somebody. I think it's unfortunate. To Mrs Richardson: we're very proud of your husband and we hope he gets well.

1720

We're here to debate respect, tradition and decorum in this place. In my year in the Legislature—it's almost been a year; the anniversary is coming up very shortly—I too have found there seems to be a lack of respect among MPPs. I've heard individuals shout across, even as I speak to an issue. Although they might not believe the same things I do, or what my party stands for, the same way I don't always agree with some of the things they put forth, I'm always very respectful here in the Legislature. I don't point people out and I don't yell across at them and try to interrupt their thoughts or call them down, although I've heard that quite a bit in this place. It's unfortunate, because I've heard from a lot of my constituents—the fact is, this place is quite a sight. When people come and watch, and hear the comments—one of the comments of the member from Hamilton Mountain was, "If my children were behaving the way the government members are behaving, they'd be grounded." In other words, it's just our side that's misbehaving; that's all she said. I believe just about everybody would be grounded, according to her, although she seems to think her side doesn't do anything wrong.

I guess that might be typical, and maybe that's just politics. Just blame it on the other side; it's always everybody else's fault. But we all share the responsibility for our own actions, for how we represent our ridings and our constituents. I think it's very important that we put our best foot forward. And do you know what? If you've



done something wrong, stand up, be a good person and just admit that what you did was wrong. That's all the people want. They just want you to be an honest individual with integrity who is willing to represent. A lot of times we sacrifice our family time and our free time as elected representatives. It is an honour for me to represent my constituents and the province of Ontario as we sit here and debate issues.

I've received a number of calls from constituents in Nipissing regarding this debate. They understand it's an important debate. But after the fourth day, they're calling and saying, "The province is important as well. Why aren't we getting back to governing the province? Why aren't you dealing with all these different issues?" I said that unfortunately this motion has been put forward by the opposition, and all business of the province basically ceases until we get through this debate. I just want to say to the members of the opposition and the third party, let's get on with the governance of the province, let's get on with the business of Ontario, let's get on with what the people of Ontario want. They want good health care, they want good education, they want to know that tax money is being spent properly, they want to know that if they get sick they can go to a hospital and there will be nurses and doctors and specialists.

When I read through the throne speech—I was very lucky, because I was able to consult with a lot of my constituents in Nipissing. They came out and gave me their thoughts, which we passed along. We were very pleased that we saw a lot of the ideas in the throne speech. A lot of them had to do with northern Ontario. One of the things that I found very interesting, even when I was on the municipal council in the city of North Bay, was that a lot of senior citizens would call me and say, "Costs and taxes are going up, and I'm actually afraid I might have to leave my house because I can't afford it." We introduced this senior citizens' property tax credit that's going to save them anywhere from \$300 to \$500 a year. That doesn't sound like a lot of money to a lot of people, but I can tell you, from the senior citizens who have called me, they really appreciate it. They see this as a way they might be able to stay in their homes. I was very surprised that Mr McGuinty said he would vote against this, that they wouldn't support this type of tax relief for our senior citizens because I thought this was something all parties could agree upon: the fact that senior citizens have built our communities, they've raised children and grandchildren and been such an important part of our communities and cities.

We're very fortunate, in my riding of Nipissing, that we have a new, \$212-million regional health care facility being built that's going to increase employment by about 150 individuals. There will be more nurses, doctors and health professionals, and these are good-paying jobs for our riding. Mattawa is building a new hospital as well, and they're doing extremely well with their fundraising for their component. I know the mayor and everyone associated over in Mattawa are doing a great job, and they're very excited.

What I think is very important when we build these facilities is there is a consideration to build a lot of it in wood. As most people realize, natural resources in the forest industry and the mining industry are so important to the economy of Ontario and so important to northern Ontario, because, as you might know, northern Ontario makes up about 85% of the geography of Ontario. The fact remains that forestry and mining are very important to us. They create a lot of employment for us and it's a sustainable, renewable resource. That is so important to us in the north. The fact that our hospital leaders are looking at building components of the hospital in wood gives confidence to the forest industry that we're not going to just build everything out of concrete and steel. That's so important.

Some people might say, "Wood might burn if it was ever to catch on fire." I've talked to a lot of experts on that issue, and what they've said to me is if a building caught on fire, if it's built out of steel and concrete what happens is the temperature gets so hot the steel actually melts and bends and the buildings come down, but if they're made out of wood—as you know, if you throw a log in the fire, it takes forever for it to burn right through—so they've said that even structures built out of big, solid, wood foundations will actually withstand a lot hotter fire than would concrete and steel.

We're very pleased today also to follow up the budget and the throne speech with an announcement of two nurse practitioners for the riding of Nipissing, which just increases the amount of health care for individuals in northern Ontario. I just want to thank my colleague Mr Clement for that announcement. I can tell you it was well received in my riding of Nipissing. From what I understand, there were a lot of nurse practitioners allotted across northern Ontario.

So, Mr Clement, thank you so much for that announcement. Thank you so much for what you're doing in the area of SARS; you've been deemed a hero. I know you've passed all the credit on to the nurses and the health care professionals, the front-line staff, and you're so right: they're the heroes of our health care centre. Mr Clement, you did not try to make political points; you allowed them to take all the credit, and deservedly so. Thank you for not playing politics. Thank you for doing the right thing. That shows leadership and integrity to me.

Also announced in the budget and the throne speech were tax incentive zones. The Premier announced in Mattawa last week that all of northern Ontario is going to be a tax incentive zone. What a tax incentive zone does is it creates a balance for northern Ontario. We see southern Ontario booming, we see the highways, the big cities and all the employment. If you pick up a newspaper there are all kinds of employment opportunities here in southern Ontario. We don't get that as much in northern Ontario. This goes a long way to levelling the playing field for us in northern Ontario, because we want to keep our youth in the north. We want to retain them and provide opportunities so they can get good jobs, raise families in

the north and build our communities. As we see our demographics getting older across the province of Ontario, we in the north see that as a critical component of building northern Ontario and building our communities.

Unfortunately, we're here tonight debating this issue, but I just want to say hello to Dr Dave Marshall. He's the president of Nipissing University. They're celebrating and having a dinner in his honour, as he was the 2002 Citizen of the Year for North Bay. It's the Kiwanis Club of North Bay that's honouring him tonight. I was hoping to be at the dinner and make a presentation to him, but unfortunately I can't get there because our responsibility is here at Queen's Park.

I want to say to Dave, good luck. It's very well deserved and we're very proud of you. Unfortunately, we're losing Dave to Calgary, but I can tell you that for the past 10 years, he has served us very well in North Bay and area. We're very proud of his accomplishments. What he has done is just incredible. It's a great way to thank him. I want to say to everyone who might be going to the dinner tonight that if you would just say hello to him for me, that would be great.

1730

Today I heard Mr Gilchrist speak of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, the organ and tissue donation. This is a great program for the province of Ontario. When Steve announced it today, I actually cut the card out and put it in my wallet because I think it's so important.

I want to read a couple of the facts here to promote this organ and tissue donation idea, some of the important facts that should be relayed to the public of Ontario:

"Everyone is a potential organ and tissue donor," no matter how old they are. "The oldest Canadian organ donor was over 90 years" old, and "the oldest tissue donor was 102...."

So it doesn't matter how old you are, you can be part of this program.

It also says here, "Organs and tissue that can be donated after death include the heart, liver, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, small bowel ... corneas, heart valves, bone and skin...."

"Studies show that donating the organs and tissue of a loved one who has died can provide immediate comfort and long-lasting consolation to family" and friends. I think that speaks very well.

That's something that's come out of the throne speech that shows we as a government have to understand, and we as individuals in our communities, as community leaders, as ordinary individuals, that if we pick up this card, sign it and put it in our wallet and, God forbid, anything happens to us, there might be somebody who can carry on with their life so they're that much richer for it. So I would encourage all Ontarians to get involved in the project.

Tradition is earned. Tradition is something that happens over a long period of time. It is a pattern of how we behave. The tradition we speak to tonight regarding the budget is an important debate that we're having. When

we talk about tradition, I think what we see in this Legislature is that a lot of heckling goes on, a lot of name-calling. Sometimes it can be very personal; it can be very hurtful. At times I've seen the Speaker throw individuals out of the Legislature, deservedly so.

If I have a wish it would be that, if I'm here, I'm going to represent my constituents of Nipissing in a very honest way, with integrity and with hard work, and that I will behave in the Legislature, that I will listen very closely to the debate, and that I can make an informed decision that best represents my constituents' interests. That's what an elected official or an MPP is all about: an individual who will fight for his constituents, an individual who will fight for what's right, an individual who isn't going to make a wrong decision, an individual who's going to do what's right even though it's tough to do at times and might be unpopular, because that is about leadership.

As elected officials, our responsibility is to show leadership at all times, either being here at Queen's Park in the Legislature or back at home in our communities, on our streets, saying hello to people. That's what makes our province so great. We have great leaders here. We have individuals from all sides of the House who are doing the honourable thing and serving their constituents, and that's very worthy and very honourable. I can tell you that every time I stand in my place and know that maybe there are some people at home watching, then I'm very proud to represent them, and I don't forget that. Every minute of the day I realize that I'm being watched and people want to know what I think. They want to speak to me, and they want their thoughts and concerns addressed. That's what being an elected official is all about. Being an elected official is being with the people and supporting what they want.

We have to respect the rights of individuals and their thoughts, but at the same time we're governed by the majority, and the majority will always win in the end. When you represent constituents, not all constituents support you, not all constituents will vote for you, but as representatives we represent all those individuals in our community, and we have to be mindful of that. But we should also remind our constituents that we, as a majority, have to make the decisions. If the majority of the community decides they want something or don't want something, we need to be very respectful of their thoughts and concerns because, after all, they're the ones who voted for us to come down here and relay those thoughts and concerns to all elected members here at Queen's Park in the Legislature.

It's an incredible feeling, after a year, to stand here and look across and see individuals whom I've seen on TV over the years or have read their thoughts and concerns in the newspaper. I have a lot of respect for all elected officials. Everyone who puts their name on a ballot to run for elected office really puts their reputation, their life, their family life, their friends and relatives in the forefront. A lot of times that can be very difficult and very painful.

Having said that, we as elected officials owe that to our constituents. We owe our responsibilities, our lives to



serve. That's why we're here. We're here to serve these individuals. Honour and integrity are so important. If you don't have that, if you can't give your word to your constituents and stick to it—if you make a promise, you keep your promise; that's what the honour and integrity of being an MPP means. It means they will stand up and do what they believe is right and represent their constituents.

I see I only have about 30 seconds left. We don't often get an opportunity to stand in our place, because there are 103 of us here who want to join in the debate, but I just want to say to the constituents of Nipissing and all those who might be watching in northern Ontario that I'm working as hard as I can for you and will be here as long as you want me.

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** I'm very pleased to join the debate on the amendment to the original motion by Mr Conway following the decision of the Speaker himself on May 8.

Normally, following the ceremonies of the House, we go directly to orders of the day. Today, what is the order of the day? What are we debating here? We are debating the amendment of Mr Kormos to the motion by Mr Conway, and we got here following a series of issues which started from the supposed budget presentation of March 27. That is why we are here today: to debate the events that have taken place following the March 27 budget.

1740

Following the budget presentation outside this House, Mr Conway, who is the dean of our House after 28 years of service, has brought a motion to the House with respect to the issue of not having the budget presented in this Legislative Assembly, as is customary; a choice of the government to take the budget presentation out of the House and into a private place—because many members were not able to access that particular place—and present it to a chosen, very particular group. The House was really not in its rightful place of having the budget presented and debated, as is normal.

That's where it began, and that's why we're here today. When Mr Conway, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, approached the House, this is what he had to say:

"I would like to move the following motion:

"That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

This followed the unusual action of the government in not presenting the budget in this House.

What did the Speaker say to the House, to the public and to the people of Ontario? He moved the motion by Mr Conway, and prior to giving time to Mr Conway to begin the debate, this is what the Speaker had to say:

"I just want to take a moment to remind members of our process in the circumstances. Standing order 21(b) reads as follows: 'Once the Speaker finds that a prima facie case of privilege exists it shall be taken into consideration immediately.' Therefore, all other business of

the House is set aside until the motion proposed by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has been decided."

Then the Speaker called on Mr Conway to initiate the debate.

Why did I read this? Because some of the presentations we've had today, especially from the government side, said, "Where did the Speaker find prima facie contempt?" Well, it's in here. It's in the deliberations of the Speaker himself. If we cannot accept what the Speaker had to say, the Speaker's ruling, then it's a further contempt from the members from the government to say, "Where did the Speaker find prima facie contempt?" It's right in here.

Thank goodness our system still works. We have staff over here who record every whisper, every action in this House and every word we say, and in case they should miss it, then we have those silent cameras, if you will, recording everything we say and do.

Today the debate on the action taken by the government goes on. Do you know what's strange? We are debating things we should be debating, because this is important. When there is an attack on our principles and our democratic process, it is important that we debate why we are in this particular situation and why we are debating the amendment and motion today.

Someone may say, "There are other important things we should be debating." I say, yes, absolutely, and we'll get to that. But it's also important, that as Speaker Carr said in rendering his decision to the House, one of his comments was such.

Carr offered a strong defence of parliamentary democracy, saying, "A mature parliamentary democracy is not a docile ... or one-way communication vehicle; it is a dynamic, interactive and representative institution that allows the government of the day to propose and defend its policies—financial and otherwise. It also allows the opposition to scrutinize and hold the government to account for those policies."

This is very important that we debate that. I have to say that I'm very pleased that indeed democracy is at work when the quintessential person in this House, being yourself, Mr Speaker, says, "Yes, indeed. This is an attack on our democratic system," and that the members of the House have a right to hold the government in contempt because they do represent the people that have elected them.

"It is an open, working, relevant system of scrutiny and accountability," continues the Speaker. "If any members of this House have a problem with the concept of parliamentary democracy, then they have some serious explaining to do."

This is the place to make those explanations and to conduct those debates. It is important. While there is other work to be done on a number of other important issues, this is important because we have seen it before, and we continue to see it on a daily basis: the attack of the government on our democratic process. Worst of all, it is an attack on every Ontarian, because if we turn it

around and say, "What are we doing in here? Who are we? How did we get here?", suffice it to say, we got here through a very wonderful system that we call the democratic process.

Prior to being elected in this House, we went to our people—every member of this House, both sides. We have used the democratic system. We went to the public and said, "I feel I could, I would, I'd like to, I can, I must, I will represent you in the chamber in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; to go there and speak on your behalf; to represent you and your issues."

When we are not in this House we are perhaps in our constituency office, attending functions. Often, constituents—if yours are like mine—say, "This bothers me, and I would like you to bring it to your caucus, speak in the Legislative Assembly. I want you to advise the Premier or the minister."

Yes, we are here to bring into this chamber and debate those issues that our constituents feel strongly about and they want us to bring into debate.

Our business is debating. What else is there? It is to debate those issues that eventually will become laws—some of them, anyway. One very important thing: we have, on a regular basis, visitors to this wonderful place and the entire building here. We have school classes come into the building. I'm sure that every member of the House has had the pleasure to receive members from their communities into this building here. What are some of the things that they ask when we meet in the main foyer, in the staircase, and we take pictures with them?

Some of the things they ask us are, "What do you do? When? Who decides? Who does what and when?"—all the things that interest them.

1750

We have our pages here, who are students themselves. I think they are here for a wonderful reason and with good cause. I hope the experience they have here—a short time, I must say—will serve them well in their lives for years to come. But while they are here, they will be paying attention and learning about the behaviour of this House, how we deal with things in this House, how we manage the various issues. That is why our democratic system is so important, because every issue that is being debated may be finally approved or not, but at least it's being debated in this House.

I have to bring to the attention of the House what Mr Conway brought to the attention of the House just a couple of days ago with respect to the special warrant that was signed by two ministers of the crown one day prior to the budget of March 27 and was not issued by the government until some five weeks after that. Why is that? That is not normal. I know this is the way the government has been working for the past eight years, but is this the way the government continues to use and abuse the democratic process; that they are to the point where they can say, "Forget the opposition, forget the House, forget the people who have elected us; this is the way we are going to do it"?

But worst of all is when we have the Premier and ministers of the crown saying, "We had to do it, because we had no other choice." Bull. Of course they had a choice; of course they had. The former Speaker himself, Mr Stockwell, said, "There is nothing the least bit unusual about what we did," adding, "The special warrant was required because the current spending authority expired on April 30, the first day of the new legislative session and the throne speech." Come on, give me a break. We haven't been sitting for three or four months. The government knew very well that they had to do it, and they didn't do it, because there were some good reasons why the government did not want to bring it to the attention of this House.

Above all, I have tremendous respect for every member of the House, I have tremendous respect for the Premier, but I have to say this: with all due respect to the Premier, when he says, "A \$36-billion plan—not our idea," well, holy moly, whose idea was it? He says that it was the civil servants, non-elected politicians, who came up with the unprecedented \$36-billion secret spending plan that was quietly approved by the cabinet.

Let me get to something very interesting here.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Are you going to sit down?

**Mr Sergio:** Not yet, no. I have another four minutes or so. Oh, here it is. I'm sure Mr Stockwell would recognize this. I'm sure every member of the House should be familiar with this by now. This is the order in council—le décret; c'est le décret—signed, and it's very important because do you know what it says in the right-hand corner here?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** What?

**Mr Sergio:** I'm very pleased that Mr Stockwell is here. It says, "On the recommendation of the undersigned"—and guess who signed this?—"the Lieutenant Governor, by and with the advice and concurrence of the executive council." Well, who is the executive council? Did the bureaucrats do this? Did they order this? No, they didn't. Who ordered that? The bureaucrats didn't. Do you know who did? The Premier and the Conservative caucus, signed by two very fine people, two ministers of the crown: the Minister of Finance and the chair of cabinet.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Sergio:** Well, they are right here and I can say their names.

My goodness, this is a recommendation from the Premier. I'm baffled that he says, "This is not our idea." Come on, folks. Like you didn't have enough for the last month and a half or two? Come on, shed some light and say, "Look, we had to do it, because we decided to do it." But \$36 billion? That's more than the entire budget.

They had absolutely no idea of coming back and facing the opposition. Their intent was, "We're going to approve enough funds to last us the balance of this year and go into an election." They had no intention of coming back into the House and facing the opposition. That's not a bad idea, to face the opposition. They were thinking so low that they were refusing to come back and



deal with the issues that are of importance and interest to the people of Ontario. They will pay the consequences, because they will have to explain soon to the people of Ontario why they got into such a jam. It can only be one reason: the government is no longer in control of the agenda, not even the bureaucrats. It is some non-elected members of their staff who made this decision behind closed doors. That is why we are here today.

I thank you, Speaker, for the time you have allotted me to speak on this important issue. It is important that we recognize why we are here, how we got here and on who's behalf we are speaking. If we cannot understand

that, in the decision of Speaker Carr, as he says, we have a very serious problem when we cannot recognize that it's us doing it. It's not the bureaucrats, it's not the staff, it's the elected people who are responsible. Every three, four or five years we have to face our people again and, I'm telling you, when I go door to door, these are the issues important to people: health care and education, of course, but democracy is right at the top and we should do everything possible to safeguard it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6 pm, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm, Tuesday, May 20, 2003.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*

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**Tuesday 20 May 2003**

**Mardi 20 mai 2003**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### HOLLY JONES

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow this House to observe a moment of silence in honour of Holly Jones.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Would all members and our friends in the gallery please rise for a moment of silence.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

**The Speaker:** I thank all members, and members in the gallery as well.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I seek unanimous consent to conclude the current debate, in light of the fact that 63,500 schoolchildren are currently not in school, and I seek unanimous consent that the question be now put.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

### CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 15, 2003, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr Conway arising from the Speaker's ruling of May 8, 2003.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I spoke on this subject a couple of days before the two amendments were put to indicate that there is example after example out there across this province of communities that are being negatively hammered because of the attitude of contempt by this government to this Legislature and, in turn, to the people it serves across this province, and to indicate that not only are communities suffering, but individuals are suffering and so are small businesses and industries across the province.

At that point, I spoke at some length about the small town of Wawa, north of Sault Ste Marie—where I grew up—that is being affected very negatively by this government's single-minded effort to deregulate and privatize the delivery of hydro to the citizens of this province. I talked about the impact of that decision on the everyday lives of those citizens and their attempts to get in touch with and speak to the Minister of Energy or to any government official in an elected capacity about this and their failure to do so—the failure of the government to

respond, the arrogant attitude of the government in front of a community that's on the precipice of disappearing if something isn't done to set up a meeting and talk to them about these very real and important issues that affect them on a day-to-day basis. That's a crisis as big and as difficult and as challenging as any crisis that has faced the city of Toronto, for example, most recently the crisis of SARS, where the government walked in here and tabled a bill and within a matter of a day resources began to flow, people began to meet with people, issues were talked about and resolved, and money is being spent. The town of Wawa can't even get a meeting with the minister who is directly responsible for the regulation or oversight of the way we deliver electricity in this province.

In the short time I have here today, I want to share with you that it's not just me who is concerned about this. There are people across Algoma, across northern Ontario, and as they begin to hear about it across this province, more and more are becoming concerned about the impact this decision to regulate and privatize hydro is having on the town of Wawa and the area of Algoma served by Great Lakes Power.

I think it's important as well for people out there who may be listening today to understand whom the government is in cahoots with as it rains this damage on this small community. It's a company called Brascan Corp, which owns Great Lakes Power. Here's an article out of a newspaper of April 30, when Brascan released its first-quarter profit information. It says here, "Brascan Looks at Power Business as Biggest Opportunity for Growth: Firm Posts Q1 Profit of \$56 Million US."

A big chunk of that money was taken directly out of the pockets of the people of Wawa and those areas of Algoma served by Great Lakes Power.

It says here that Brascan "sees great growth potential in the power-generation business and is looking for more acquisitions in Canada and the United States."

"Brascan spent \$650 million Cdn on 16 hydroelectric plants last year and will continue to build that part of its business, which presents Brascan with its 'biggest opportunity.'"

I suggest that one of their biggest opportunities is out there as they eye the pocketbooks and bank accounts and pocket change of the people of Wawa.

"While the US utility industry is in turmoil, that may provide Brascan with a chance to get good assets at a good price...."

"We think, longer-term, that this business is very high quality and will produce the types of returns and the type

of stability in cash flows that is a great business for us to be invested in'....

"Brascan is one of Canada's oldest conglomerates, with controlling stakes in such well-known companies as metals giant Noranda Inc, lumber producer Nexfor, real estate developer Brookfield Properties, Brascan Power and Brascan Financial, owner of the Royal LePage real estate brokerage. It also owns Great Lakes Power Ltd."

In this article about the profits Brascan is making, there isn't one reference to the damage it's doing to the people, to the town of Wawa and to its customers all over the Algoma area.

People have to understand that Wawa is slowly but surely becoming the clearest, purest face of privatized, deregulated hydro in this province. It may be happening to Wawa today, but it could be in your backyard tomorrow. In Sault Ste Marie we had a contract with Great Lakes Power, which gave us a preferred rate for hydro, that has now been cancelled. There has been no new agreement on that rate, and so, come the end of this year we in Sault Ste Marie will be facing the same scenario that Wawa is facing. Our industries and businesses will be facing the same high costs. I suggest that towns, cities and communities across this province will be facing this very difficult challenge in the very near future if they're not already facing it.

It behooves all of us to sit up and take notice and pay attention to what's happening in Wawa, because Wawa is becoming known, as well, as the first community to stand up and resist the agenda of this government to deregulate and privatize hydro. They brought together a group of citizens, who said, "If this is what it's going to cost us for our power, if Brascan is going to get away with this and the government won't talk to us about some resolution or answer to this challenge or dilemma for our community, then we're just not going to pay. But we're not going to keep the money ourselves; we're going to pay what we owe in trust. We're working with the municipal council to pass a resolution to that end."

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They were about to do that up until last week, when Great Lakes Power, under the pressure of that possibility, blinked, backed down ever so slightly and decided to give a little bit of relief to the people of Wawa on their distribution costs, which will go nowhere near to reducing the very onerous and almost impossible charges that have been laid on this community since May 1 of last year.

The important thing here is that Wawa has become, very clearly, the symbol of resistance in this province to the deregulating and the privatizing of hydro. The rest of us should take heart from that. We should take courage from the fact that these folks have had the courage to stand up in the face of this giant and say no, and to take the small action that they could to indicate to this company and this government that it was serious about this issue, and that it was going to do something that would not look good on the government or the company, and create a fight that would become known from one end of this province to the other if it was allowed to continue on.

I have to say to you today that I am heartened that the people of Wawa have not been bought off by this small reduction in their bills, in their distribution costs by Great Lakes Power, and that they continue on in their attempt to meet with the Minister of Energy, to talk to him and his government about the impact of this agenda on them and their ability to make a living and actually to have an economy in that part of our province.

Let me just share with you a bit of an editorial that showed up in the Sault Star on Wednesday, April 9, which should make you, I think, sit up and take notice. It says, "Rectify Electricity Mess." It's calling on the government and it's calling on Great Lakes Power to rectify the electricity mess in Wawa and in the customer area of Great Lakes Power. It says:

"How ironic. Wawa has survived challenges as dramatic as the shutdown of the mining operation that was its reason for existence for so many years, but the community may be dealt a crippling blow by the outrageous local price of something it still produces in great abundance—electricity.

"Too many people across the province, including political leaders, have ignored or dismissed the tragedy that is eating away at the little town.

"That's a mistake. Even if people are so heartless as to ignore the plight of a fellow Ontarian, they should pay great heed to what is happening there. Wawa could be"—and I suggest is—"the canary in the mine shaft, an early warning of what awaits us all unless Queen's Park comes to its senses and reverses its devastating electricity restructuring strategy.

"In Wawa's case, we can't even blame privatization directly. For generations, the community was served well by Great Lakes Power. The little corporation was an incongruous privately owned island serving Algoma in the middle of a vast sea of Ontario Hydro serving the province as a whole.

"While the public utility struggled with mounting debt and generation problems, GLP quietly but valiantly hung on and prospered. Customers served directly, as in Wawa, and indirectly, as in Sault Ste Marie through the Public Utilities Commission, were pretty happy with the arrangement.

"When the province restructured Ontario Hydro and changed the rules governing electricity generation, distribution and pricing, GLP stayed on.

"If the same private company is still providing electricity to the same geographic area, how come the price of hydro for many consumers in the Wawa area has almost doubled?

"How come residents are worried they will be forced out of their homes by their electricity bills?

"How come businesses are closing or cutting back, putting people out of work?

"GLP says it is following the rules for billing customers, explaining that under provincial pricing formulas the distribution charges are high because of the 'rural' circumstance.



"But the townsite of Wawa, at least, is about as compact as any suburban neighbourhood. What Wawa has that most cities do not, however, is multiple hydro-electric generating stations within its municipal boundaries.

"Hydro generation is touted as one of the most benign methods of capturing energy, cleaner and less problematic than coal or oil or nuclear. If this town has such natural advantages and still can't afford the electricity produced in its own backyard, what hope is there for the rest of Ontario?

"If Great Lakes Power is following the rules, the rules are a bad joke.

"This is a bitter example of how badly Mike Harris's Conservative government has fumbled electricity reform," and I suggest now Ernie Eves. "Why is it taking the Conservative government of Ernie Eves so long to recognize the problems and fix them?

"Maybe Eves is waiting until he's closer to calling an election before cleaning up the mess. That"—alas—"may be too late for many people in the Wawa area whose lives are being turned upside down by an unfair and untenable energy policy.

"The 'reform' must be reformed now."

Let me just share with you a bit of the historical context of the Wawa problem as well. On May 1, 2002, several radical regulatory changes affecting the Electricity Act, 1998, came into effect. As you may be aware, the majority of these changes, combined with other economic and changing weather patterns, resulted in a detrimental effect on users of electricity in Ontario. These detrimental changes have resulted in a large flood of media reports and letters from various public utilities, municipalities, special interest groups and residents from across the province. Perhaps the most salient examples of the problems created by the reregulation of electricity in Ontario can be best illustrated by the district of Algoma and the township of Michipicoten, exclusive of the city of Sault Ste Marie.

In December 2002, after extensive consideration of many examples of the detrimental trends experienced by the users of electrical power in Ontario, the Legislature considered and passed Bill 210, the Electricity Pricing, Conservation and Supply Act. Among other actions, and certainly most important to the people of Ontario, the act fixed the commodity rate of electricity at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. This fixed rate, which is in effect until 2006, ensured that all users in the province of Ontario would pay the same commodity rate for the electricity power they used.

While Bill 210 may have temporarily prevented any further escalation in the commodity rate for electrical power, it did not address those areas of the province, particularly the Algoma district, that experienced large increases in distribution charges. In some cases, the increase in the distribution charges alone has placed the affordability of electricity beyond the grasp of the average person. Customers of Great Lakes Power located in the township of Michipicoten, Dubreuilville, Laird,

Macdonald, Meredith and Aberdeen Additional and across the Algoma district have all recorded increases in hydro rates that approach 40%. While Bill 210 fixed the commodity rate at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, the average residential consumer in the subject area pays approximately 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour in distribution and other charges. Thus, the average total charge in the area is 14.2 cents kilowatt hour. In comparison, these same residential customers were paying in the area of 8.5 cents per kilowatt hour just prior to May 1, 2002. That's the increase they've experienced.

More concerning is the fact that Great Lakes Power has indicated that it will seek additional relief through increasing distribution rates—distribution and commodity—in three consecutive years once rate hearings resume. This, combined with a drastically declining economy, will severely disable the Algoma district and most certainly the township of Michipicoten—Wawa.

Significant layoffs have already been experienced in Dubreuilville and White River. These layoffs have begun to further cripple the economy in Wawa and the surrounding area. A solution must be found to this very devastating problem. Attempts have been made to discuss this matter with the Ministry of Energy on a number of occasions. Letters have been sent by the council of the township of Michipicoten, the residents of the township of Michipicoten and adjoining municipalities. Attempts have also been made by a group called POWER, People Opposing the Whitewashing of Electricity Rates, to contact the Ministry of Energy by letter, phone and through requests for meetings. There have also been attempts to meet the Premier, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Lastly, the matter has been raised several times in the Legislature. All of these efforts have failed to even approach discussing a possible resolution to this matter.

### 1350

The issue of high power rates is a matter of government policy. Further to that, the township of Wawa would be remiss if it did not include related government policy issues in any discussion regarding power rates. To that end, this report does discuss how government policy matters in selected areas apply to the situation. In addition to dealing with the direct issue of electrical rates, this report also identifies several areas that could be considered as supplementary issues.

Bill 140, the Continued Protection for Property Taxpayers Act, amended the Assessment Amendment Act by exempting private power dams from the municipal property taxation base. Although some mitigating measures were provided to affected municipalities and school boards, detrimental effects were, and continue to be, experienced. The justification for the change included the consideration that the municipal property tax system was hindering the further development of hydroelectricity in the province of Ontario. So Wawa must pay for that, I guess.

On January 31, 2001, then-Premier Mike Harris announced the government's vision for the future of the



province of Ontario. The key component of the announcement was a 21-step action plan to move the province into the 21st century. The plan was to provide and highlight a path for the ongoing commitment of the government to the residents of Ontario for the promise of a better life. Consideration should have been given as to how the changes to the electrical market may or may not assist in accomplishing this goal, particularly as those changes relate to the Smart Growth program and now the introduction of supplementary proposals on tax incentive zones.

This government obviously does not understand the impact of the decisions that they've made where the deregulation and privatization of hydro is concerned. It's devastating towns like Wawa and all of those communities that are served by Great Lakes Power; it's killing their industry; it's killing their business; it's driving people out of their homes. Senior citizens who live on fixed incomes don't know where they're going to get the money for their electricity power bills. They're already strapped up there with the poor economy. We've had a difficult time over the last seven or eight years up in northern Ontario. This just adds pain to the already existing misery that was there.

We always looked at the fact that we had hydro in our backyard as an advantage. It has now become, for everybody concerned, and for this town in particular, a liability; something that this government, if it were serious about its platform for change for the province, would get together with the people of Wawa about and fix immediately.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** It's interesting that we are here after quite a number of days, debating a motion by my colleague Sean Conway, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the dean of the House, a member who has been here for 28 years. We are debating a very simple motion. The motion essentially says, I want to remind the members of the House, that we should present the budget of the province of Ontario to the Legislature first.

Mr Speaker, that is an incredibly simple motion. It follows of course upon your finding that there was a prima facie case of contempt of the government of Ontario by reading their budget at a warehouse in Brampton owned by Magna International.

It seems to us on this side of the Legislature, and frankly I think it should seem like this to all members of the Legislature, that this is a reasonable, simple and traditional remedy to the situation in which the government put all of us. We don't want to be here.

I think the first thing we should recognize is how we got into this situation. We got into this situation when the government decided and announced, I believe the day was March 12, that the Legislature, which had not sat since mid-December, would not come back on March 17. Unilaterally the Premier, as is his right, went to the Lieutenant Governor and asked that the Legislature be prorogued. What that means, of course, is that all legislation dies. Anything that was on the order paper is now gone

and, for all intents and purposes, a new session of the Legislature will begin, but not on the scheduled date of our calendar; it will begin when the Premier decides to call the Legislature back.

It was indicated that the Legislature would come back at the end of April, meaning that the Legislature would not meet for 128 days. In the meantime the Minister of Finance announced, almost simultaneously with the announcement that the House would be prorogued, that she would deliver this budget at a venue outside of this place.

We know the commotion that caused, and rightfully so. I just want to bring to the attention of legislators the words of the Speaker of the British House of Commons, Madam Speaker Boothroyd. She said, when asked about this situation, "That's a very strange way of doing things. There would be an uproar in the British Parliament. [The ... speech] could only be done through the House of Commons and there would be great demands of recall of Parliament [if it wasn't]."

She went on to say, "It is the questioning of that [budget] statement that is so central to our democracy. The elective representatives [of the people] get the right to question. I'm very adamant about the way Parliament works."

That is what the Speaker of the British House of Commons said about this. Further to that, probably the pre-eminent authority today on Canadian Parliament is the former Clerk of the Canadian House of Commons, Robert Marleau, who wrote to every member of this Legislature on March 15, it is a "gross affront to parliamentary democracy. Budgets are about levying taxes and spending the proceeds. Over the centuries, we, the people, have acquired rights from the crown to scrutinize government policies, especially spending policies, through well-established and time-honoured parliamentary process." That's what the former Clerk of the House of Commons said, somebody Speakers from across Canada are known to have conversations with when they wish to determine tradition and precedent.

Mr Speaker, your ruling 10 days ago or so, when you found the prima facie case of contempt, was one that all of us, if we gave it any thought at all, would recognize to be correct. What I found disturbing, though, about your ruling was the government's attitude. The government decided that they didn't have much of a case. They decided they could not convince Ontarians that they were not in contempt of the Legislature and were not in contempt of Parliament. So they chose to attack the Speaker of this Legislature on a personal level. On that very basis alone, attacking the personal integrity of Speaker Carr should be, for all members of this Legislature, enough to cause you, on your side of the House, to also support Mr Conway's motion.

**1400**

As we all know, Mr Carr is well-respected not only in this province and in this place but he is respected across this great country. I have attended meetings with Mr Carr with Speakers and presiding officers from across Canada,



and I can tell you that Mr Carr is held in the highest respect by other parliamentarians, by other Speakers and by Clerks of other assemblies. To attack Mr Carr because you cannot attack his logic is an affront to all of us. Mr Carr has worked diligently not only within Canada but throughout the entire Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to bring dignity to this House, to this Legislature. I think that attacking this person, the Speaker of our House, someone who is beyond attack, someone who is not even seeking re-election and who has no reason to do anything but maintain the highest of all authorities, is something the government itself should be ashamed of.

I look across and I see many of my friends on the government benches, and I say to you, can you really support a government which is clearly in contempt of this Legislature by all accounts other than some dog-and-pony paid lawyers whom you might put up to get your own particular opinion; that by any dispassionate, non-partisan consideration would understand this is an affront to Parliament—and the ridiculous, absolutely absurd arguments I have heard from some of my friends on the other side, which I'm sure they would have trouble believing themselves: that this was about a new way of doing business, about a new way of communicating, about a whole lot of wonderful 21st-century sorts of things and that the Parliament was just evolving.

They seem to forget that Parliament could have gone to Magna International if we had wanted to, but the people who would have decided this would have been this Parliament. It would not have been decided by a government; it would have been decided by motion in this place. That's how it would have happened. That's how we change. Parliament changes with the consent of its members; it does not change because of the whim of some government which is on a power trip, which is trying to convince Ontarians through advertising dollars, through huge expenditures of the public purse, through continual ads, through media event after media event, all being paid for by us, the taxpayer, to promote their own particular agenda. We should all find that offensive. Therefore, I think all members here have a duty to support Mr Conway's motion which finds this government to be in contempt and as a remedy suggests we do what we have always done, what all Parliaments have always done, and that is to read the budget here in the Legislature first. That is not a gigantic leap.

I call upon my friends across the floor, when it comes to making a decision on this very fundamental contempt motion, to do what they need to do: they need to support our traditions, they need to support our practice, they need to support the very essence of parliamentary democracy.

As the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, there are many things in Algoma-Manitoulin I want to talk about that, at the moment, are being kind of pushed off the page. We are not able to talk about health care. We are not able to talk about our continual effort to attract sufficient doctors to the various communities across the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin to provide us with

service. We are continually asking the government to understand that we not only need the specialists in Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie and Thunder Bay and the access to those specialists in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury so that our folks don't have to travel too far but also that we want to make sure that the northern Ontario travel grant is not an impediment for people in Algoma-Manitoulin attending a specialist because they are financially incapable of going.

We are convinced that the forest industry within my riding is coming under considerable pressure. I look over at the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane and some of the other northern members who share my concern that, with the rising Canadian dollar, many of our forest product companies—who have already suffered through softwood lumber duties and taxes, all unfair and unreasonable, but they are surviving under that regime—are very, very concerned that the amount of profit or margin that they may have going into the American markets will become an increasing concern and will cause increasing difficulties to deal with. Companies are already at the edge. Some of our lumber producers have had too many layoffs already, be they White River; we've lost shifts in Chapleau; 150 people in Dubreuilville are presently laid off; and there are significant concerns in the softwood lumber business throughout all of the constituency.

There are many challenges, and yet we have not heard anything from the government that would lead us to believe that the smaller communities of northern Ontario, and even the larger communities such as Sault Ste Marie, are going to be able to survive versus the rising Canadian dollar and the effect that has, combined with the softwood lumber duties, combined with energy prices that have been quite outrageous over the last period of time, and whether that will continue to happen. We need to have debates about those issues, but those debates are not happening.

The contempt motion is the most fundamental motion that we will face in this Legislature. It is the most fundamental thing we do because it's about the power of the Legislature. As representatives here in the Legislature, when you are in contempt of the Legislature you are in contempt of every one of our constituents. We have a government that can't seem to make the distinction between itself—the government—the Legislature and the Conservative Party. Over and over again we've seen those distinctions blurred. The Conservative government tends to spend public dollars as if they were Conservative Party dollars. It's very convenient. You don't have to raise the money; you don't have to do anything. You just spend, spend, spend my money and everyone else's money on your particular propaganda, to no particular effect, at least for the good for the people of Ontario.

That lack of distinction is, I think, at the heart of why we went to Magna corp. It was at the heart of a media event; it was at the heart of controlling the spin; it was at the heart of making sure that the government got its correct spin on the budget. They wanted to cut out any



kind of criticism. They wanted to make sure that anybody who might have questioned what was in the budget had no opportunity or platform to do that. They wanted to make sure that there could be no good analysis that came out. And in some ways they've succeeded. It's amazing. The firestorm over providing the budget out at Magna corp was such that nobody ever remembers what was in the budget. There's a reason for that, and it's quite simple: the absolutely outrageous nature of the presentation. What did McLuhan say? "The medium is the message." That's what it was. This is wrong. I think there were 85 or 90 editorials across the province during that time period that said, "You're in contempt. The government should not do this." Every day for 13 days, if I recall correctly, the Globe and Mail criticized the government for this, and they did it anyway.

1410

How many editorials across the province supported your position; supported the position that tradition did not mean anything; supported the position that you can do what you want, provided you get elected every four years, and you don't have to pay attention to anybody else in the meantime? How many supported that? The answer is simply none. The score was overwhelming. It was larger than the Blue Jays score last night in terms of a win.

I don't really have a lot to say, because I don't really know what to say, Mr Speaker. Your ruling speaks for itself. Your ruling clearly says, in a well-reasoned, intelligent way, that there is a prima facie case of contempt. There is no other place, no other Legislature in no other country, in no other province, in no other state—an Australian state, for example—no other jurisdiction that belongs to the Commonwealth that has ever attempted to read a budget outside their own Legislature or Parliament.

It is with great sadness that many of us are forced to stand in this Legislature trying to defend the rights of the people, rights we thought the people had earned hundreds upon hundreds of years ago in this country as we struggled for responsible government. It stretches back for centuries. It stretches back in this place—we're having a debate these days as we talk about what happened to the site of the first Ontario Parliament, where they want to build a car dealership. And I noticed on the news that they were commemorating the Rebellion of 1837.

I would like to think that the members of this Legislature, if they were in York in 1837, would have joined William Lyon Mackenzie in marching up Yonge Street. That is when we took the power from the Family Compact. That is what many historians would see as the beginning of responsible government in this province: when the people took control of their affairs from the governor. The budget represents that; supply represents that.

I would ask that when it comes time, the people who understand how absolutely important the resolution is, which Mr Conway has put before us, that it actually is the crux of our democracy, will stand and support Mr Conway.

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** I'm very pleased to be able to join this debate. Like so many of my colleagues, I want to have an opportunity to express how my constituents feel about this issue, this story and indeed the decision you made, Speaker, in terms of the fact that there is a prima facie case of evidence of contempt of the Legislature.

I think it's important to point out that unfortunately this government's contempt for the House did not begin with the Magna budget. As a new member in 1995, I certainly recall the excitement of being elected to the Legislature for the first time and looking forward to having the opportunity to represent my constituents and believing very much that there would be an opportunity to see democracy at work and be a part of that process. I recall that fairly early in my first term an economic statement was being delivered in the House, and it was actually a lock-up. When we came back into the House that afternoon—I think it was late in November 1995 or maybe early in December; I'm not quite sure of the date—we discovered that indeed the government had put forward a piece of legislation, which is now memorably known as Bill 26, an omnibus bill that was an astonishing piece of legislation that the government tried to sneak through, which basically turned on its head all kinds of legislation and had a huge impact on the operation of this province. It brought forward the Health Services Restructuring Commission and basically took away the government's responsibility and threw it on to the responsibility of the restructuring commission. There was education restructuring—the point is, it was an extremely offensive piece of legislation that really set the stage for what we are seeing even with this contempt motion that's before us today.

Were it not for my colleague Alvin Curling, who made a decision on his own that he would not rise and would not vote, he would not leave the House and would not follow through—if that had not happened and we had not sat in the House overnight, essentially, the government would not have bent on that issue as well. They would not have allowed any committee hearings. It was the beginning of a process that I think has continued to this day.

We've seen that particular bill; we've seen rule changes coming in place related to the limiting of debate. Certainly the fact that now we are offered the opportunity to speak, as I am right now, for 20 minutes, and 20 minutes alone, on this and any other legislation is another limitation to the process of democracy. We know that the government has a rather astounding record of invoking closure on all kinds of pieces of legislation in a fashion that has never been done before to try and end debate. That process has gone on since 1995.

We've seen our committee structure, which once I think was a truly extraordinary process—certainly when I speak to my colleagues like Sean Conway and some of the veterans in the House, they tell me of the times when indeed we brought legislation forward and the committee system went out to the province and really listened to the



people and there was actually a sense of camaraderie, may I say, between the three parties in terms of trying to really bring together legislation that would work—that committee system has virtually fallen apart.

I think what we're talking about is a government that has presided over a steady erosion of the democratic tradition of the Legislature, and I think, very sadly, they have done it deliberately. It has been an actual, deliberate decision made, which to me has shown the arrogance of this government.

The contempt that this government has shown for the Legislature has continued past this budget farce as well. We certainly have heard about the process by which this farcical budget in the Magna auto parts plant took place, but it has gone well past that. I don't just mean in the form of backbenchers making obscene gestures and then denying it—lying about it, in fact; most seriously, it took the form of a sustained attack on you, sir, a reprehensible attack on the Speaker, that was made not only by the same member who used those sneers and scowls in the place of reasoned arguments but also by senior cabinet ministers who have used their time in this debate to attack the Chair.

Contempt, in my opinion, is also what the government shows for this Legislature when we see speeches like those given by various ministers of the crown when, instead of talking about the issues at hand, they waste the time of this House with partisan nonsense that is particularly distressing coming from these senior ministers. Let me remind the House and the people who are following this debate what the resolution that we are debating today actually says: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

Others before me in this debate have pointed out that this should not be a contentious issue, and I know there are members on the government side of the House who do agree that it's not a contentious one or a difficult one for the government to support: the budget should be presented in the Legislature first. Yet the government members have been standing up over the last five or six days speaking out against it, using specious arguments, saying there was a budget lock-up, using other quite bizarre arguments that make no sense, people like the Minister of Labour even suggesting that although Mr Conway's motion was kind of a motherhood statement that nobody could actually disagree with, he was thinking about voting against it anyway.

There's a pretty interesting notion. A motion comes forward stating that the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario—again, not very contentious—and although some members of the government, hopefully probably most members on the government side, agree with the sentiment, agree with the tradition—we'd like to think so—they say they're going to vote against it anyway. Why? Have you no principles? Do you care at all about the institution of Parliament? Or are government mem-

bers so terrified of the thought that supporting this motion means effectively admitting that you were wrong not to have presented the budget in this House, that each and every one of you is willing to compromise your own principles, your own integrity, simply to avoid admitting wrongdoing?

1420

*Interjection.*

**Mr Gravelle:** I'm glad that the members are listening.

I must say I've been very interested, Speaker, to see the way some of the members on the other side of the House, on the government benches, have reacted to this debate, both in the House and outside of it. It's fascinating to note. I saw the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, I believe, join my colleagues from this side of the House in applauding my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Mr Conway, when he first asked the Speaker to make a ruling on contempt two and a half weeks ago. I didn't see their applause particularly as evidence of their lack of confidence in the government, to tell you the truth, or even as displeasure with the budget process; I saw it, I hope, as evidence of their respect for the institution of Parliament and its practitioners. They were applauding a colleague on the other side of the House, my colleague Mr Conway, who made an eloquent, learned and passionate argument about something he cared deeply about—nobody questions that—and they admired that. I don't think there's any shame in that. It was good to see them acknowledge that.

Similarly, I found it interesting to see my colleagues from London West and Ottawa West-Nepean suggest that they agreed with your ruling, Speaker, when you found a case of *prima facie* evidence of contempt. Now, does that mean that these two members have given up on their government? I suspect not. I admire them for saying those words. I would suggest what it said was that they have enough confidence, and perhaps some integrity, to understand that admitting a mistake, admitting this particular mistake, in fact may strengthen their own credibility.

It's easy enough, perhaps, to say, "We should put the politics aside and look at the issue at hand." I certainly understand that I am very much a member of the opposition who is asking government members to vote for a motion that their own leader, the Premier, has said he will not support. Yet I ask them to think of their constituents and to think about how they felt when they were first elected to this extraordinary institution, the Parliament.

When you go back to talk to the people of your riding and your community, I think it would be appreciated if you said, "I absolutely believe that the budget should be presented first in the Legislature." I suspect you'd get a pretty large level of agreement with that. To me that's a succinct, simple, straightforward thing to be able to say to the people you represent. You don't have to start bobbing and weaving. You don't have to explain that regardless of its apparent innocence, this motion was not



in fact some sort of trap. Mr Conway fashioned the motion very, very carefully in order to allow as many members of the government side, in fact all members of the government side, all three parties, to simply carry on.

It would have been great to have said, "Yes, Speaker. Indeed your ruling makes sense. My constituents agree that the budget should be presented in the Legislature," and that they are proud to have supported this motion.

Speaker, it is worth remembering why we're here debating this issue right now. It came about as a result of something that few of us in this House, or indeed this province, had really expected or contemplated before: a government deciding to push back the scheduled spring session, prorogue the House and present the budget outside of the Legislature.

One of the interesting defences we've heard during the debate was, of course, "We couldn't present the budget because the House wasn't in session." That certainly has been one of the more embarrassing defences, in that the Premier decided indeed that he didn't want to sit in the House. He clearly wanted to avoid question period or wasn't prepared to come forward and had other plans altogether.

We certainly know about the order in council that was signed for \$36 billion in spending that was done very much behind closed doors, which I don't think would have been found out if not for, again my colleague from Renfrew, Mr Conway, being made aware of that extraordinary apportionment.

The government made a really clear decision that they wanted to maintain some form of commitment to the previous promise that they were going to present the budget before the end of the fiscal year. So somebody in the bowels of Mr Eves's office said, "Here's how we'll do it. We'll present this budget outside the House. It'll be just fine."

As I look back on it now, it is astonishing to think that that really could happen, that that advice would be taken, let alone hearing the statement from the Premier that indeed the \$36 billion that was done as an order in council—as a special warrant, I guess is the term—was on the advice of the public servants, which to me just reeked of a peculiar form of arrogance, or of trying to avoid responsibility for a decision they made. They made all these decisions, recognizing that there was a price to pay for it.

I suppose there are members over there who will say that we're dwelling on this way too much, but I think it's incredibly important—and, Speaker, obviously you did as well, and your ruling was one that you obviously researched very carefully.

Ultimately, what it comes back to for me are my constituents. When this happened, my constituents reacted with a form of disbelief. It was quite remarkable, the number of people who called my office. People often say that the public isn't engrossed in the minutiae of government and Parliament, but I think they have a great respect and regard for it. In fact, I will tell you that some of my constituents were rather angry at me because I wasn't, in

their opinion, speaking up strongly enough at the time. I must admit that I spoke about it, I did a press release, I spoke to the media, but they didn't all hear me, I guess. They were calling and saying, "Look, this is huge. This is a major issue." This is one of those issues that I think people reacted to in almost a visceral way. Whether or not they felt they understood all the principles and intricacies of Parliament, and some of them acknowledged that they didn't, they instinctively felt that this was wrong.

When one lines it up with all the other actions this government has taken over the last eight years to basically denigrate Parliament, to treat Parliament as kind of an annoyance—in fact, it's always fascinating to remember that the former Speaker and present government House leader issued a ruling of contempt against this government—I can't recall the year exactly—related to a piece of legislation that the government was acting as if it had passed. They were putting out notices of the legislation being done, long before that actually took place. That was another ruling of contempt that, indeed, I think was an appropriate ruling.

My constituents, I think, were even angrier. They were very angry about it and wanted me to speak up because they saw it, as I think I see it, as just another attack on Parliament from a government that has seemed to go out of its way, in my opinion, to show the worst aspects of politics: the politics of division, of wedge issues, of politics that turn people against each other, which encourages cynicism about government in the worst way.

The record of this government, in my opinion, is a very sad one in many ways, but perhaps one of the worst is the way in which it has alienated so many of the people it is supposed to represent. I do my very best, as I think most members do, to represent all of my constituents, which can be a challenge. But this government, as a policy, doesn't seem to want to do that at all.

People call my office constantly. They come and see me, talk to me, stop me on the street and tell me that they get the impression that this government honestly does not care about people with disabilities. They tell me that. They tell me it doesn't care about students, single mothers or people receiving social assistance. I could go on forever, as a former critic of Community and Social Services, about some of the decisions you've made related to social assistance. It shouldn't surprise you that my constituents might say that.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Mike, that's below you.

**Mr Gravelle:** All I'm telling you is what people come in and tell me. I appreciate, I say to my colleague from Kitchener, that you may strongly disagree with that, but there is no denying that there's a level of cynicism, suspicion and bitterness that is felt by many who feel that their government has abandoned them. It just is out there, and I think you know that. That doesn't mean you're like that, but that is the way that this government has acted.

Taking the budget outside of the House, in an attempt to sidestep the scrutiny that the parliamentary system



provides, is just another message to many people that the government does not care to listen to the people of Ontario or their representatives, and I don't think you can deny that.

Some of my colleagues have raised the issue of government advertising. I agree that it is closely tied into this debate. It is also an issue of contempt, in my opinion, for the institution of Parliament. The government is of the opinion that the only way to communicate with the people of Ontario is to buy their way into the homes of Ontarians. I think that is sad. I think that's very sad. It's an admission that the government is obsessive about controlling their own message. It's one thing to send out information about West Nile virus, SARS and other health-related issues—I think that's very important—but it's another to run self-congratulatory ads or messages about all the money that you say you've spent, or are apparently spending, on education or health care.

I think people have become so desensitized to those ads that we sometimes forget just how offensive they can be, because at heart they end up being cynical and, I think, quite destructive. I say "cynical" because they are basically defensive. They are a product of a government that does not want to admit that the status quo is less than perfect, and they're destructive because they take away funding that could be used by the programs and systems they are ostensibly promoting.

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I honestly believe that most people would rather be pleasantly surprised, perhaps, by the quality of health care they receive when they have to go to the hospital or the improvement in the state of their children's education environment, if that's the case, than be constantly assaulted with feel-good messages about all the wonderful things the government is apparently doing. They don't believe this any more. I mean, the reaction that you get is extraordinary. I'm sure you're getting it on your side of the House as well. Every dollar that we spend telling people how great things are is one less dollar we spend actually improving things.

That's one of the reasons why Dalton McGuinty will stop that partisan advertising—absolutely stop it—and will make sure there's a real arbiter in terms of how that decision is made. In fact, there are so many democratic reforms that I am excited about that Dalton McGuinty will be bringing forward to truly bring democracy back to this Legislature, and it's something that we all anticipate.

I just think it's very sad that this government does not basically understand or even seem to care about what it is doing. Ultimately, I think it's very sad that we're having this debate in the first place. The Speaker quoted Erskine May on the issue of contempt, noting that, by definition, "any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence. It is therefore impossible to list

every act which might be considered to amount to a contempt...." That's really the issue here: that the government, in all its twisting and turning to avoid the Legislature, was in contempt of it.

I think this is fascinating, because the reality is that what put this government in the position it is in is its real and long-standing contempt for the Legislature, and there is example upon example. If we had a government that recognized the importance of full debate, complete with questioning from the opposition, they never would have pushed back the spring session of the Legislature or taken the budget outside of the House. They wanted to avoid that. They would never have put on an expensive, invitation-only infomercial in Brampton, and they wouldn't be in this mess. In fact, in opposing this motion they are continuing to show contempt, in my opinion. They believe that they are above the law, the traditions and the rules of Parliament.

I believe that my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan spoke very wisely, as she usually does, when she reminded this House earlier in this debate that we are the inheritors of over 700 years of democratic tradition, and it behooves us to respect that. The reason we are having this debate is because this government does not respect our democratic traditions. Instead, they seem to see them as some sort of impediment. It's time, I say to my colleagues on the other side of the House, to rethink this rather belligerent ideology, accord to the institution of Parliament the respect that it deserves, and support this very important, very straightforward and very acceptable motion from my colleague from Renfrew, Mr Conway. Because, frankly, it's simply the right thing to do.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** As I begin today, I think it's worth reminding people who are watching how we got to where we are today. We are dealing with a government that earlier, in March, decided it was going to throw years and years of parliamentary tradition to the wind because it was more interested in a public relations stunt with respect to the budget than it was in ensuring that we were going to hold the budget in this place, that the assembly was going to be recalled, as it should have been, and that all members would have been in their place, dealing with the government as it brought forward its budget.

I don't know who was involved in that decision, what brain trust was involved in deciding that they were going to throw away all those years of tradition, but the brain trust made a huge mistake, because immediately after the announcement by the Treasurer and the Premier that the Legislature was in fact not going to be recalled and the government instead would hold its dog-and-pony show up at Magna, a major contributor to this party, there was a very immediate negative reaction, not just with respect to Toronto media but, frankly, right across the province.

I know the Sudbury Star in our community, which is notorious for not supporting any position of New Democratic Party, was actually very opposed to the decision the government had made. There were other, what I term to be right-wing media outlets, usually traditional sup-



porters of this government, who said the same. In fact, the response across the province from editorial writers and from those on the news was overwhelmingly against the government decision: it was a slap in the face to democracy, a slap in the face to other MPPs not of the government side and, frankly, a slap in the face to the public, who had every right to expect that after at least three months of not being in session, the government was at least going to recall the assembly so we could sit and have the budget. This was especially true because the House was supposed to be recalled just after the March break, and the Premier decided that wouldn't be done. And not only would that not be done, but a time-honoured tradition of having the budget in this place would also be swept under the carpet so the government could have its public relations stunt out at Magna, I guess in the hope they could control the media coverage of that event.

When the House was finally recalled, and that was a month after the dog-and-pony show at Magna corp, people will recall there were cases put to you, Speaker, that this was a case of contempt. You, in your wisdom, came back to this Legislature in a very important decision and said essentially—and I'm quoting from the last page of your ruling, page 11—that “I am finding that a prima facie case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do.”

That is the process the House is involved in. We are dealing with the Speaker's ruling of contempt and what we should do as a remedy to deal with that finding. For those who haven't been watching this debate for all of last week, Mr Speaker, I should just point out that we are dealing with amendments to the motion whereby the House would deal with your finding of contempt. Of course the motion that was moved by Mr Conway said that this House declares that it is the undoubted “right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario.” That would end, forever and a day, the government's PR practice that it implemented, in this case, of deciding to just hold in disdain years of tradition, hold in disdain the rest of us and the public as well and have their budget off-site.

That motion has now been dealt with with two other amendments, the first by my colleague Mr Bisson, which says, “and not to present the budget in this way”—that is, here in the assembly first—“constitutes a clear contempt of the House.” I think that very clearly falls in line with the ruling you made that a prima facie case of contempt had been found.

The motion has been further amended by my colleague Mr Kormos, and it says very clearly, “and its members,” meaning that if the budget was not presented here, it would be a clear case of contempt to both the House and the members of the House, being all of us who are duly elected by the people of Ontario. We are in the rotation dealing with the main motion and the two amendments, and what the government should now do or might do.

The last time I spoke to this, I talked briefly about some of the comments that had been made, particularly by the government members, as they tried, oh so very hard, to say it really wasn't contempt, that the budget has been done off-site like this before, that it didn't matter if it had been held at Magna anyway because it had been clearly the intention of the Premier to bring the House back and for the budget to be tabled here.

I made some comments with respect to some of those observations the last time I spoke. I just want to add to them this time particularly because I had an opportunity to listen to Mr Turnbull last week. Mr Turnbull was trying very desperately to make a point that this wasn't so out of the ordinary, that budgets had been presented outside this place before, that it was quite commonplace, that he didn't understand what the to-do was all about, that there really wasn't a problem, that somehow this was not a common practice, that this is what we did every second budget in this place.

What's interesting is that if you go back to the government's own press release, which was issued on March 12, it is clear that it was not a common practice to hold the budget outside the assembly, that it's not done every second year, and that the government itself recognized that this would be a major break with tradition in having the budget off-site.

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Here's what Madame Ecker had to say: “The Eves government will change the way budgets are presented in Ontario.” I repeat, “The Eves government will change the way budgets are presented in Ontario,” said Madame Ecker very proudly in her press release. Not only that, the Minister of Finance “underscored the point when she acknowledged that, while past finance ministers have gone outside the chamber to present budgets due to a parliamentary filibuster or leak”—and I'm quoting Ms Ecker in this—“What is ... important is that this, the actual initial communication of this to the public will occur outside the Legislature.”

It was because she was really proud of that fact. She acknowledged that in the past we might have had to have a budget outside this place because of a leak—that happened particularly at the federal level—or because of a filibuster occurring in this place, which is what happened when the NDP was reading petitions and Robert Nixon had to table the budget outside of this place, but she made it very clear that this was the first time that the government was actually going to purposefully, consciously make every effort to communicate the budget outside of this place—not because of a leak, not because of a filibuster; because that was the first route that they wanted to take to deliver it to the public—and that it was a communications message, a communications event first and foremost. Most importantly, I repeat, she said that while past finance ministers had gone outside the chamber to present the budget due to a parliamentary filibuster or a leak, “What is ... important is that this”—these are her words—“the actual initial communication of this to the public will occur outside the Legislature. That has



occurred in some circumstances before," but "not in this kind of circumstance."

So the government was very clear in what it was doing. The government knew exactly that this had nothing to do with a leak or a stall in the parliamentary process. No, the government wasn't even going to call the House back, so that wasn't even an option. The government wanted to use this as a communications tool, as a public relations stunt, and that's what the government was going to do. The government didn't care that people were outraged by this. The government didn't care that many of its right-wing editorial friends wanted nothing to do with this and were condemning the government daily, not just in Toronto but right across the province. The government didn't care. They got their back up to the wall and said, "We know better. Who cares? We're the government." In a display of arrogance that has been continual with this government, they just decided to forge ahead, torpedoes be damned. "Who cares? Who cares about the tradition? Who cares what the lawyer the Speaker retained has had to say? Who cares what the editorials are saying? Who cares about the people coming into our offices?"—because of course they did. I heard some of the Conservative members say last week, "Oh, we didn't hear from anybody about this." Well, they cornered some other Conservative members outside of a caucus meeting in mid-March, and there were a lot more of those spilling their guts about how many people were complaining, particularly their own Conservative supporters who were complaining, about the break in tradition.

There's no doubt in my mind at all that those members across there got complaints, but they didn't care. They'd made a decision. They're the government. "We're going to do what we want to do, and that's the way it's going to be."

It would have been so easy for the government to stand and say—because they had the time to do it; the announcement about going to Magna for the dog-and-pony show was well in advance of the actual charade itself—"We made a mistake. There's been a really visceral, negative reaction. We're going to back off." But no, they got their back to the wall, more adamant and insistent than ever, then breaking with tradition and away they went with the dog-and-pony show. Now the government is reaping the consequences of the dog-and-pony show, of the media communications event, because now we're dealing with contempt and the House is dealing with the remedy for your finding of contempt.

Speaker, given what you have said, given what has happened here in the province, the motion and the amendments themselves should be accepted, because we should be able to be guaranteed that never again is a government going to consciously, purposefully decide to circumvent the House, contravene years and years of parliamentary tradition and hold a budget off-site merely because they're trying to control the media spin. That's why everybody should be voting favourably with respect to this motion.

We shouldn't be surprised by the contempt shown by this government on this issue, because, frankly, it's quite in keeping with the contempt that this government has displayed to the public on a number of other issues. There are two that I want to deal with directly.

The first has to do with the contempt, the disdain that this government shows to Ontario families who have autistic children. I've been dealing with this issue for some time now in an effort to get the government to understand that autism should be recognized, the IBI treatment for the same should be recognized as a medically necessary service, and the government should pay the cost for this very expensive treatment through OHIP. When the government does not do that, many, many Ontario families who have autistic children know that although there is a treatment that could probably help their child, they will never be able to get it because of long waiting lists and because of the discrimination that this government practises against autistic children over age six, when the government cuts off that treatment merely because those children turn age six.

Last fall we brought a number of families to this Legislature, you will recall, particularly who had children who were age six or were going to be turning six shortly, who were receiving IBI treatments, whose families had noticed an incredible change in their situation: that they were for the first time starting to focus, were being toilet-trained, were finally able to feed themselves, were not banging their head against the walls continuously. Because of this treatment, they were noticing a marked change in their condition, to the point where they were convinced that if the treatment could only continue they would be fully functioning members of society, would be able to live independently and not end up in an institution. We brought many families here—Leo and Sheri Walsh of Welland, for example, who were having to sell their home in order to pay for IBI treatment for their son. Can you imagine in 2002—because we did this last fall—an Ontario family having to sell their home in order to get medically necessary treatment for their child? That is shameful.

Because we brought so many families and we made it a public issue, on November 18 the minister made a big announcement that the government was going to double funding for IBI treatment by the year 2006-07 and go from \$39 million to \$80 million at that time. What was interesting about the announcement—because I was there—was that the government didn't lay out any timeline for their funding, didn't announce there was going to be new funding last fiscal year to help get some kids off the waiting list, and didn't even put out a timeline about how much and over how many years they were going to spend that money. What the government also did not do was remove its discrimination against autistic children who were turning the age of six, who now get cut off from treatment. That was November 18 that the government announced this funding. The government re-announced the funding in the budget.

Did you know that I checked last week and none of the agencies that provide IBI treatment in the province

have received a penny of the money that the government announced November 18 to deal with autistic children? The government made an announcement and hasn't flowed the money. That is disgusting, it is shameful, it is clear evidence of the contempt that this government and these ministers in the House today show for autistic children and their families. Not a penny has been allocated to those providers to deal with those children, despite an announcement made last November.

You know what else we discovered, because the ministry has given some of the providers an additional inclination of how much money they're going to receive? Across all of northern Ontario we're going to get enough money to get two kids off the waiting list. Two children across northern Ontario are going to get treatment this year because of the money the minister announced in November and still hasn't flowed. That's shameful too.

We now have the scenario in the province where we have parents who are in court, right here in this city; parents of autistic children who have had to go to court to try and get what is rightfully due to their children, spending thousands of dollars to try to get what they are entitled to. We have 100 families before the Ontario Human Rights Commission on a complaint of discrimination. We have the Ombudsman, who is doing a special investigation looking at the waiting list for IBI treatment. We have a government that shows disdain for these kids and their family by not recognizing IBI as medically necessary and not funding it through OHIP. That is shameful. That is contemptuous. It is unacceptable that in this day and age these kids can't get treatment that is available and can't get treatment that will dramatically change their way of life so they can be fully functioning members of this province. It is unacceptable.

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I want to deal with one other issue, and that has to do with our regional hospital. We are a community that had an order by the Health Services Restructuring Commission that said that three of our hospitals had to amalgamate into one. From the very beginning the construction costs of that amalgamated hospital were grossly underestimated, and that was the same in most communities. The cost for equipment alone was estimated at \$9 million; it's closer to \$80 million.

For the last at least one year there has been no construction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital because the costs have increased and this government refuses to fund that increased cost. We have a hospital that is not complete, that has been directed to be amalgamated as a result of a commission put in place by this government, and we cannot get phase 2 construction underway to complete our hospital.

Our community has risen to the cause, because our community, in fundraising in the last three years, has raised over \$23.7 million, which is about \$5 million higher than the local share that we were told we had to raise. The city of Sudbury itself, through tax revenue, is going to contribute another \$26.7 million for the hospital and the cancer centre that's attached there as well.

The community has done its share, has met its obligation, has met its responsibility. Do you know the party that continues to show contempt for our community? That's this government. This government holds our community in disdain, in contempt, and for over a year now has not uttered a single word about when it is going to put its money on the table so we can get our hospital finished.

Finally, last week the chamber of commerce in Sudbury, which usually doesn't support the NDP and usually says nothing contrary with respect to what this government is doing, had to come out and say very publicly, "It puts a black cloud over the community." Debbi Nicholson, who is the president and CEO of the Sudbury chamber of commerce, said, "From an economic point of view, it doesn't look good on a community. We've attracted new doctors here, new businesses to the community. They came with the understanding that the hospital was moving forward.

"Now there are a whole lot of questions ... about" the hospital. "It's a critical component in our community and the uncertainty does not bode well."

As well, the chair of the economic development corporation said, "Until we have some assurances that it's a go-forward situation, that the money is committed to finish" this project, "this community is going to be continually struggling. All we are saying is, for God's sake, get on with it." They are exactly right.

We have a medical school that's coming to our community and we have a hospital that's not complete, so where are those new doctors actually going to do their training? Can you imagine how difficult it is to try and recruit physicians to come to be part of building a new medical school when they don't know if the hospital is going to be finished so that their students can practise there? That's ridiculous. But what is hardest of all to accept is that our community has risen to the occasion. We have raised much more money than we were ever asked to do. We've done our bit. It's time for this government to stop showing contempt to Sudbury and area. Stop showing disdain for our community and put your money on the table to finish our hospital now. This is an important project in our community. We need quality care, and it's time that this government put its money on the table to finish our hospital.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for me to wear my "Adopt It" Bill 16. This is a sticker to promote my adoption disclosure reform bill.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Further debate?

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** I gather from that that the government and the official opposition are no longer putting up any speakers, so we will continue to struggle along as best we can, nine of us, keeping this debate going.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Christopherson:** I don't know. We're going to get a couple of more hours anyway. We'll certainly ex-



haust our speakers' list, for the simple reason that when you take an issue like this as seriously as all of us in the opposition benches have said we do, we're taking the position you've got an obligation to carry this thing through to its completion, because if we let go of it, if we don't make it a priority, then I have to say I'm concerned that we're playing into the very kind of scenario that let the government feel they could get away with this in the first place.

The last time I had a chance to speak to this, I pointed out that I think a lot of us on the opposition benches and a lot of people in Ontario have to wake up to the realization that we have to take some of the blame for the government not so much taking the action they did and ultimately having the Speaker find a *prima facie* case of contempt, but we need to be very clear that it's about the fact that you thought you could get away with it. That's what's really scary for me, as someone who is not seeking re-election. I'm not going to be back here in the next Parliament, so I don't have political hay to make out of this particular issue. But I have to tell you, I'm worried about the fact that your people in the backroom, the cabinet, and the Premier felt that the people of Ontario were either so gullible or so disinterested as to lead you to believe you could do this and get away with it.

Let's step back and ask ourselves, how did we get to a position like that? Well, the fact of the matter is that anybody who has watched this place consistently over the last eight years will know that the rule changes which have happened here have not just been a matter of inside baseball, which is often the way the public views debates around the rules, and that's totally understandable. But there are enough people who do know the significance of the rule changes, and there are enough people who ought to know the significance of the fact that major pieces of legislation are introduced here in the House and then we have either very little or no committee hearings on them.

So you limit the ability of the opposition to take the floor, because our time has been restricted so tightly, you deny us every single possibility there is to slow the House down if we believe something is important enough to do that, and then you refuse to take the legislation from the floor of this place to a committee process and give them the mandate to go out into the public and ask the people what they might think about their own laws. Because at the end of the day, this isn't your place any more than it was ours when we were in power or the official opposition's when they were in power. All of us are there temporarily—and whether “temporarily” is one term or 42 years, it's temporary; at some point, you leave those seats and the cabinet room. So what you're doing is taking away the public's right to democracy.

To come full circle, that's why I have taken and continue to take the position that all of us have some responsibility, and that includes people who are here today in the galleries. Wouldn't it be nice if there were more people here outraged over the fact that the Speaker, a member of your own party, felt it necessary, in the defence of the democracy this place is supposed to

represent, to find a *prima facie* case of contempt against his own friends?

I have to say that's not an easy thing to do. There have been a lot of people who have commented on the growing respect, the continuing respect, that they have for Speaker Carr in making such a difficult ruling. Think about it from just an ordinary Ontarian's everyday-walk-of-life point of view. The fact of the matter is that when the honourable Speaker leaves the chair, removes the robes and puts his civvies back on, these are his friends. He has served with these people for 13 years, the same as I have with my caucus colleagues. It cannot be easy to walk past the frosty attitude that I'm sure some government members show toward the Speaker because in their hearts they believe he has turned on them. That has to be difficult.

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I would hope that people well beyond the opposition benches would be willing to stand up and go on the record and acknowledge that Speaker Carr went above and beyond the call of duty that most of us face when we're elected to this place, when he found himself in that chair as a result of a majority vote of this House, and he, in his own heart, felt there was so much at stake that yes, he was prepared to, in some ways, put himself into a position of being excommunicated by his own. Again, I can imagine there are people in the party and supporters across the province who are angry. But the anger should not for a moment be directed to Speaker Carr. What he did was speak up for what the traditions are and the significance of this place. I want to remind my friends across the way that the only difference between us and being barbarians is the fact that we have this kind of debate back and forth of ideas and words, and strategic moves, tactics and things of that nature that don't involve violence. But how far are we away—and I realize I'm talking in an extreme now; fair enough, but I want to make the point—how far are we away from the day when this place is just not here? Gone. You've privatized it, turned it into condominiums and that's the end of it.

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** Can we do that?

**Mr Christopherson:** I see one of the backbenchers laughing. I won't mention his name—I know he means it tongue in cheek. But there he goes; he said, “Can we do that?” It's funny, but for us over here there's an element of, “Boy, oh boy, they would if they could get away with it.” If they thought it would get them a vote, they'd do it. It'd be in the platform. But when you're at the point, and this is what I believe Speaker Carr is pointing to and it's certainly what we're saying here, where you made the decision that this place is so irrelevant to you—by the way, I think every Ontarian should find that alone insulting—because when you find this place insignificant and irrelevant, you find Ontarians insignificant and irrelevant because this is their House. This is the people's House.

We are at the point where you decided that it was OK to take the presentation of the budget—you know, there is an argument, and Speaker, you've been around here



like me for a long time now and have seen a lot of budgets and throne speeches. There's an argument that 90% of politics or the decisions in this place are about the budget, because in most cases, where you spend money is where you can effect change. The very essence of government authority, government power and government control lies in where a majority government decides to place the emphasis of priorities in a budget. That is why, for centuries in the parliamentary process, with a couple of exceptions that you've tried to hang your hat on—and nobody's trying to let you get away with that, I might add—but with just a couple of exceptions, for centuries Parliaments, the House of the people, have been where budgets have been presented. You decided that your partisan interests were more important than the people of Ontario, more important than the tradition of this place, more important than the legacy of those MPPs, Tory and others, who came before you and occupied those very seats, that all of that was to be set aside and thrown away—Conservatives, mind you. Aren't you supposed to be the ones who don't want to change anything? You like everything the way it is. And why not? In most cases you're winning under the current rules, so why wouldn't you like things the way they are, you and your supporters? You're the ones that normally stand on the notion of tradition. Heaven forbid the smallest amount of change should happen. I can remember where some people were on an issue that involved a piece of apparel around the RCMP. That whole argument, in large part, was, "Wait a minute. Tradition." That's your history. That's what most people thought you were: Conservative. It means, "Keep things the way they are. Preserve it. Keep it."

Yet you're the ones who took a step that I can assure you nobody in the NDP caucus and, I suspect, the Liberal caucus would ever dream of taking: throwing away hundreds of years of tradition, accountability, minority rights—and I remind government members that there are real people who died over history fighting to give us these rights. You're the party, the party of conserving everything, that took the precious and respected traditions of this place, threw them out the window and said, "Sorry. It's more important for us to look good as the Progressive Conservative Party rather than the government of the people of Ontario."

That's why we're not going to back away from this debate—nor should we, because, I argue, that's how we got into this situation: by too many of us standing aside and letting you get away with what you've done.

We saw this coming. Again, I'm going to come back to this argument, to this historical fact, because it's real. A few months after you were elected, you brought in the omnibus bill, the bully bill, just before Christmas, and it took Alvin Curling to refuse to vote, which caused a parliamentary bind, if you will, because the House couldn't move forward if he refused to vote—I forget for how many hours. It was certainly overnight. It certainly required some imagination and creativity. Let me tell you, given what he went through as a human being, it

took an awful lot of commitment to what's important to do what Alvin Curling did. He will be long acknowledged and respected by me for what he did and, I think, many others. Why did he do that? Why did he take such an extreme position? Anybody who knows Alvin Curling will know he's not exactly a fire-breathing radical. That's not Alvin Curling; that's just not who he is. Yet a person with the respect, a veteran MPP, was prepared to put his physical discomfort on the line, and I remember vividly that night and those times. That was not physically an easy thing to go through. He put his political career and reputation on the line, because you don't know where things like that are going to end up, or what's going to be said about you at the end of the day.

It's not like he had to go out and make a name for himself. He'd already been a cabinet minister. He was already very well known. So it wasn't about opportunism. This was a man, a member of this Parliament, who felt so strongly about what you were doing that he was prepared to put himself through what he did to try to drive home the point: that you can't ram that bill through without giving us public hearings, because that's what you were attempting to do: a couple weeks before Christmas, a massive bill, a bill that led to umpteen hospital closures across this province, that took all kinds of legislation from the floor of this place of debate into the secrecy of the cabinet room.

It took a commitment to democracy to the point where New Democrats were prepared to join with Liberals to support Alvin Curling.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Christopherson:** Well, we did. I remember, when he refused, we already had it set. My friend Dominic Agostino from Hamilton East, a Liberal and myself, as soon as he said, "No, I'm not going to vote," we bolted over there, and anybody who remembers the front page of the Toronto Sun saw the two of us standing there side by side like this, blocking the Sergeant at Arms from getting to the member, because it was the only way to carry out the strategy. We don't do that very lightly.

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** That is contempt.

**Mr Christopherson:** I hear from the former cabinet minister that that is contempt. Well, that, my friend, is a laugh.

*Interjection.*

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**Mr Christopherson:** No. No. Even you shouldn't stoop that low. That's what you want to talk about, bodily functions? Go away. I have a feeling that will be taken care of soon enough, but go away.

I've got to tell you that the fact of the matter is that man's a hero. You haven't done one tenth of what Alvin Curling has already done, if you stayed here another 200 years. You should be so lucky to have people speak about you the way that we all talk about him. He stood up for democracy. You, my friend, supported Bill 26, the bully bill. You supported, I suspect, going to Frank Stronach's property to announce the budget of the people in his



backyard. Let me tell you something: it's not a coincidence that Speaker Carr, one of your own members, felt that an attitude like yours deserves to be debated, put forward and held accountable in front of the people of Ontario, because that's who you insulted.

I remind you that this isn't one of your favourite little warm and fuzzy bills that we're debating. We are debating contempt of Parliament, and let's not forget that it's not the first one. You had another one, and—boy oh boy, if history serves me—it seems to me that was a Tory too, who stood up and said—these are not his exact words, but his actions said, “As much as I like my friends and want to please my friends, this is wrong.” It's also interesting that that very Speaker is now the government House leader. But the fact remains that this isn't some plot by the opposition to make such a wonderful government look bad. You did that yourselves. You did that by showing the contempt that you did for this place and for the people of Ontario.

I invite anybody to think about what the dynamics of this House would be like right now if it were Bob Rae and the NDP sitting there, and Mike Harris, Chris Stockwell and the Tory caucus sitting here, which is the way the House looked in 1995. I can just imagine the theatrics that would put us to shame. I have to admit that they would be Oscar performances.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** Not a chance.

**Mr Christopherson:** There's the man himself. There we go. The Oscar winner himself is here.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Stockwell's eyeballs would be this big.

**Mr Christopherson:** They would be. I said the last time I spoke that you'd still be peeling him off the ceiling, and you would be, because there is no defence of this. There really isn't. At the end of the day, you're going to regret it. It's yet one more stain on your record.

I have to tell you that I personally find it very offensive to sit here for eight years—and again, I'm not running for re-election—and watch the relevancy of this place, of committees, of public hearings, of the voice of the ordinary Ontarian, of the rights of the opposition members—slowly drained away, chipped away. It's heartbreaking. I think it is oh, so correct that this House is bringing this point to the people of Ontario by debating it day after day after day. What would be your next step if we didn't draw the line now? We didn't draw the line before, when you changed the rules; we didn't draw the line when you stopped taking public business out into the public; we didn't draw the line when you took away a lot of the other rights and privileges that opposition members had. We didn't draw the line then, and this is what you did.

I fear what their next step would be if we don't collectively, as Ontarians and parliamentarians, say, “Make no doubt about it, this is the line in the sand. You are not going to do this to the people of Ontario any longer.”

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** It's a pleasure for me to rise to join this debate. It's always fun to follow

my colleague from Hamilton across the way. As a person, I know that when he leaves this Legislature, over the coming few years, if the people of my riding do me the honour of sending me back here another four years, on a personal note, I'll miss the member from Hamilton. I won't miss his very loud speeches, which I've been listening to for eight years now. They require you to listen, that's for sure, because you can't cover your ears and do your reading and drown him out; you've got to hear everything he has to say. So I'll miss him as a person. I wish him well in his future endeavours. I believe he's running for mayor of Hamilton. I haven't talked to him yet about how that's going, but I know he will be leaving for that.

**Ms Martel:** Send him a cheque.

**Mr Maves:** “Send him a cheque”—the NDP asking for money off the bat here, for campaign donations. But I'm sure the member opposite is doing fine in that regard, and I wish him well.

Speaker, it always helps to kind of revisit where we are and how we got here. I may note that I believe we're into our third week of debating this motion by Mr Conway. We have not been allowed, because we're debating this motion, to start debate on the throne speech yet. We still need to do that.

When the Legislature came back, we had a throne speech, which was very well received throughout the province, much to the chagrin of the members opposite. The throne speech was very well received. I can understand why they want to tie up the Legislature for weeks on end, because what we have to do as soon as we conclude this debate is revert to discussing the throne speech. Because that was so popular, I know the members opposite don't want the people of the province of Ontario to hear more about it. Immediately upon winding up this motion, we will be speaking about the throne speech for at least another week, and that was full of good news, an excellent description by the current Premier of his view of where we are moving into the future.

After that, of course, is the whole debate surrounding the budget, and we need to begin to debate the budget bill in the Legislature. It's another good-news budget by this government in so many different ways.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Maves:** The members opposite again don't like the budget. They know the content of the budget was excellent. They don't want to debate that. They are fearful of debating the content of the budget. We want to get to those things.

I see the Liberal opposition has no longer put up speakers on this motion. I think they feel that three weeks is enough debate on this motion. They want to get on with the people's business and debate the throne speech and the budget. But the NDP continue to want to drag out this debate, to not let the people hear about the throne speech, to not let the people hear about the budget.

It's been said many times over the past three weeks that we have been debating this motion—I've heard



many members over here on our side of the House talk about how we got to this stage. We got to this stage, really, because the Premier of the province was caught between two commitments he had. He wanted to have a throne speech. There were many people in the public in Ontario and at the same newspapers that criticized him, eventually—but many of those people said, “What’s the Premier’s vision? We have a new Premier now who came along. Halfway through his mandate, what’s his vision?”

When he became the Premier of the province and we came back into legislative session, there were a lot of bills on the order paper that came forward when he was not the Premier. We dealt with those. Then he did want to put his stamp on it and let the people know about his vision. You traditionally do that in the House through a throne speech. So he adjourned the Legislature and we prorogued so he could have a throne speech. He set that for April 30.

At the same time, having been a finance minister for many years, Premier Eves knew the importance of having a budget come out before a fiscal year-end, which is March 31. So he got caught between the two dilemmas and he had to make the decision of having the budget and delivering the budget first of all in the House. He tabled the budget before the Minister of Finance decided to do her first budget speech outside the Legislature. So he was caught between two commitments, and the solution he came up with was to allow the first budget speech to be done outside the Legislature.

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While it obviously wasn’t the most traditional, Speaker, you yourself talked in your ruling about the other times in Ontario’s history when a budget speech has been done outside the Legislature. The Ontario Liberals did it in 1988, I believe, when they went down to the press room and delivered their speech there. The NDP did not sit for the last 18 months they were in office. They tabled their budget, the social contract—I believe you called it a mini-budget in your ruling or alluded that it was very much like a budget. They didn’t come into the legislature to do that.

It’s interesting, when the members from the NDP get up and speak in the House, that they complain about this break with tradition, but they themselves did the very same thing, as you alluded to, Speaker, in your decision on the *prima facie* case. It seemed to be OK for them then, and they now seem to forget having done that. But you were right to allude to that.

The federal Liberals have done the same thing. They didn’t pass a budget in the federal Parliament for nearly two years, I believe, and all their finance bills were done outside the Legislature. So it has certainly happened before.

As you said in your ruling, circumstances were different in each and every one of the cases I have mentioned. In your ruling—I recall listening very intently that day—it seemed to me you couldn’t find anything out of order and you couldn’t rule on convention or constitutional problems. It very much seemed like the Table had assist-

ed in determining that there was nothing out of order with the budget process. I’m paraphrasing you, but you decided it was time to perhaps set a precedent—and precedents get set now and then—in your words, because you had received so many phone calls and had heard from people who didn’t like the process, you were going to decide on a *prima facie* case of contempt; however, only the House can decide on that, and that’s why we’re here debating Mr Conway’s motion.

So really it came down to a break with tradition. As my colleagues have said, there are a variety of examples of breaks with tradition that haven’t even been talked about. I know my friend Mr Chudleigh and the member from Hamilton talked about Mr Curling and when the House was held up. It was really quite contemptuous, in my view, to have the members of the opposition on that occasion basically stop by force the Sergeant at Arms from doing his duty. I think most people, when looking back at that, would find that a very contemptuous act. During that time and during that filibuster, a lot of other things happened in the Legislature that were out of order, contemptuous and definitely breaks with tradition.

I’ve seen people lose their temper in this Legislature over the past eight years. I’ve been in the Legislature when people twice crossed the aisle to fight, to physically fight with members on this side of the aisle. That was never spoken about in the media. Everyone kind of lay low about that. They said tempers flared and that’s too bad and people were taken out of the room. It’s interesting to me that the members opposite can bypass that and overlook that and the media always overlook that. In fact, I remember one time when one of our members raised that issue and was actually berated by the press for making it up. But I was in the Legislature and saw it happen. So there are a lot of breaks with tradition. There are a lot of things that people would find contemptuous that just aren’t talked about by members opposite.

It appears the Liberal opposition now have stopped putting up speakers. We look forward to finally voting on this motion and getting on with the business of the people of Ontario. What will that be? As I said, we will return to debating the throne speech, an excellent throne speech, delivered here almost three weeks ago now. We look forward to debating that. We also look forward after that to debating the budget, because again we delivered an excellent budget in the House. We are delivering our fifth consecutive balanced budget. Incredibly enough it’s the first time since 1908 that any government has delivered five consecutive balanced budgets. That’s a remarkable accomplishment. In the past four years, and this would be the fifth year, we have actually paid down the debt by \$5 billion. I get a kick out of the members opposite, the Liberal members especially, when they talk about the eight years we’ve been in office, and their union friends who make up the working family coalition.

**Mr Bisson:** They’ve got union friends?

**Mr Maves:** Oh, they do have union friends; you’re right.

They make up this group called the working family coalition, who ran some ads. The working family coali-



tion TV ads really parrot everything the Liberals have been talking about in the Legislature; for instance, the debt issue, that over the life of this government we've increased the debt by some \$20 billion.

This goes back to the fact that when we took office in 1995, we were facing an \$11.5-billion deficit left to us by the NDP. They had run four consecutive deficits over \$10 billion, and we were facing a fifth. We reduced expenditures right away and reduced the first-year deficit to about \$8 billion. The next years we went to six and four and so on. If you add that up, you get to about \$18 billion or \$20 billion. Depending on how much you want to assign to the NDP for that first year, 1995-96, you get, over that time, a cumulative amount of debt, that's true.

But the really bizarre thing is that the Liberals have the audacity to stand up and complain about that, because they complained about every single expenditure reduction we did as we moved toward balancing the budget, and they continue to complain. They hung from the rafters and screamed at any expenditure reduction we made from that 1995 budget, it didn't matter what it was, even though for five years they had also complained about the NDP's runaway budgets and deficits. When we started making expenditure reductions, the Liberals complained that every one of them was bad.

So over four years, rather than five, which is what we campaigned on, we balanced the budget. If you accumulate some of those deficits, you get to \$18 to \$20 billion, as I said, depending on how much you want to apportion to us and how much you want to apportion to the NDP in their last year in office.

So it's really funny, really ironic to hear the Liberals and their union friends trying to now say, "They managed poorly. They shouldn't have raised that much debt over the years." When we were balancing that budget, they did nothing but scream and complain and say we shouldn't have cut any of that spending. That's something we look forward to debating when we get to the budget and can talk about this government's five balanced budgets in a row.

At the same time, we've been reducing taxes. Everyone in this Legislature now knows all the income taxes we've reduced for people, the property taxes we've reduced, the small business tax, the employer health tax. We've now reduced workers' compensation premiums by about 26%. Every time we made a tax cut in Ontario, our revenues actually went up. Why? Because in 1995 when we got elected with our agenda, the businesses around Ontario and around the world said, "Finally someone is speaking some common sense. Finally we can start trusting that a government won't punish initiative and won't punish entrepreneurship." They started to reinvest in Ontario and create jobs. We've had well over 1.1 million new jobs created since 1995, and because there are 1.1 million more people working and paying taxes in Ontario, revenues have gone up every year. What did we do with that? Well, we balanced the budget.

We've also added \$10 billion to the health budget. When we took office, the expenditure on health care was

about \$17.4. Today it's well over \$27 billion and on its way higher. It's a budget that's very difficult to hold in check. So as we reduced taxes, our revenues went up, the economy grew, revenues went up, we paid down the deficit in four years instead of five, and we dramatically increased funding in health care. Hospitals have seen a huge increase, especially since 1997.

Increases in CCACs, community care access centres, were up dramatically. For several years in Niagara, between 1995 and 2002, it was up about 125%. We froze it for a year when we had a problem with the CCACs. We had some auditors go out and tell us we had serious problems with the way they were being administered. So we dealt with that, we fixed them and again we've started to put some more funding in the CCACs. But it's important that taxpayers know that these huge increases in funding we gave to the CCACs were being handled properly and that they went into services, not administration and waste.

**1530**

So we really need to get back to debating that. We need to get back to discussing, for instance, all the dollars we have put into colleges and universities. We've made record announcements and record investments in colleges and universities. We've allowed for nearly 130,000 new spaces in colleges and universities. Down in Niagara, Brock University has been a huge beneficiary of that with their major expansion. Niagara College built a whole new campus in my riding in Niagara-on-the-Lake. My former colleague Tom Froese was very instrumental in ensuring that investment happened. At Niagara College they are currently doing a viticulture and tourism addition to their campus in Niagara-on-the-Lake, to educate people for the booming tourism business that's in Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake. So that's something we want to get back and talk about, and of course the increases that went along with that.

With the double cohort now moving into colleges and universities, with this huge expansion of space on all the campuses of colleges and universities throughout Ontario, they also required more funds for more professors and instructors, and that has been there, especially to the satisfaction of the colleges and universities sector.

It's always a bit of a tussle. Everyone obviously wants a little bit more, and even when you give them more, they say thanks for a little while and then want a little bit more again, but that's the regular to and fro of government. We need to get off this debate and on to that budget debate so we can discuss that.

There have been dramatic increases in funding in special education over the past few years. The Rozanski report came in and reviewed our funding formula, which the members opposite panned for years—they were right in lockstep with their union friends; they panned it for years—but Rozanski came back after meeting with all of the unions and school boards across the province and said resoundingly that the funding formula was good, that removing the right to tax from school boards was the right thing to do. The members opposite opposed that.

They wanted to give back to school boards the right to raise your property taxes. We said, "No more," to that and Rozanski said, resoundingly, that was correct, that moving to a per-student funding formula was the right way to go.

He also said that we should add some funding now to education. I think he said the number was \$1.8 billion over the next three years. Premier Eves has committed to actually raising it by about \$2 billion over the next three years. So we should engage in that debate. We sent out Mr Rozanski, he did his work, he did his consultations all around the province and came back with some instructions. We said we would adopt his report, and we've done that. That's reflected in the budget and in the throne speech, and we need to get back to speaking about that so the people of Ontario will hear about that.

So there are a lot of things we need to do. We need to wind up the debate on this. We need to have the vote on this, get past this and move on to the throne speech and the budget. I know many of our ministers have bills they want to introduce and get debated in this Legislature.

**Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing):** Get on with running the province.

**Mr Maves:** That's right. My colleague from North Bay says, "Get on with running the province," and continuing the fantastic growth it has experienced over the past eight years, an unparalleled growth that no jurisdiction, no G7 nation can match.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Maves:** It's funny, over the past few years when the economy is going well here, much to the chagrin of members of the NDP, they get up and complain, "It's only because of the Americans." Well, the American economy has been struggling for pretty much three years now, but our economy has not hit the skids. We've done extremely well. We've had an economy that has done better than anyone else in the G7 nations. Clearly our economy was resilient to any problems in the United States, and that's largely because of the actions of this government.

I want to thank you, and I look forward to continuing the debate on the throne speech and the budget in the future.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** I had not expected to be standing up so fast. As I was the third or fourth speaker for the NDP, I didn't think they were going to get to me today. I don't know why my friends on both sides of the House have decided that that this debate is over and decided they don't want to speak to it. Because really, quite importantly, what has happened here in this Legislature needs to be debated long and debated hard.

What you have ruled, Mr Speaker, and the motions, the amendment, and the amendment to the amendment before us are absolutely important to the cause of democracy; they are absolutely important to the people of this province. They will be talked about and debated, I'm sure, for years and years after the vote is held on what we are going to do and whether or not the government is in contempt of this House.

I cannot remember a more important debate in this Legislature in all the years, save and except perhaps the amalgamation debates going back into 1996 and those horrible years.

I cannot remember a more important debate, and one that has captured the imagination of the people out there more than this one has. In the last couple of weeks I have been out knocking on doors, as I do every summer, not in anticipation of an election—because I am one of those who don't believe you have the nerve to call it—but because I think it's important to go out there and talk to the people about what concerns they have, right on their doorsteps, to find out what is important to them.

What we're finding is important to them would not surprise you at all. What is important to them is a lot of local circumstances. They're concerned about local issues. They're concerned about the environment in the Beach. They're concerned about what's happening in their schools: the fact that the schools are losing teachers and vice-principals and custodians. They are worried about the island airport. They are worried about a lot of things.

But you know, the number one issue at the door is the contempt of this Legislature. It is the number one issue as I go door to door in Beaches-East York. People cannot understand why this government has been in contempt of this Legislature. They cannot understand why a place like Magna corporation is now the seat of government, is now the place where decisions are made and public announcements are made. They cannot understand how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent so foolishly. They cannot understand why a government, which people have said—they always thought Conservatives were people who looked to our past with some pride, who looked to our democracy with some pride, but they obviously see in this government that that is no longer the case.

Mr Speaker, the issue before us today started with your statement from this House. We've been going—I believe this is day six; I heard three weeks from the previous speaker. Yes, I guess if you count Thursday as one week, and then you count the following four days as the second week and you count today as the third week, Tory math will say that it's three weeks long. But in fact this is the sixth day of debate. They have not been full days. They have been six days, no evening sessions, and all members have not yet had an opportunity to speak.

I would suggest, Mr Speaker, that what you said bears repeating after these six days, and there are a few paragraphs I would like to read from your own statement which I think clearly and succinctly sets out the task before all of us. Mr Speaker, you stood up in this House and you said, "As I've already indicated, there have been occasions in the past when a Minister of Finance or a Treasurer has neither personally presented the budget in the House nor read the budget speech in the House. In the case at hand, however, the government indicates that the events of March 27 were motivated by a desire—in the words of a March 12 press release issued by the Ministry of Finance—'to have a direct conversation with the people of Ontario.'



"To the extent that they imply that parliamentary institutions and processes in Ontario tend to interfere with the government's message to the public, such statements tend to reflect adversely on those institutions and processes. If the government has a problem with those institutions and processes, or if it wants to improve them, why did it not ask the House sometime during the last session to reflect on the problem and to consider appropriate changes? Traditional ways to do just that would be to introduce a bill, table a notice of motion, enter into discussions at the level of the House leaders or ask the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly to study and report on the problem. Given the public's reaction to the government's decision to stage a budget presentation outside the House, I think Ontarians are rather fond of their traditional parliamentary institutions and parliamentary processes, and they want greater deference to be shown toward the traditional parliamentary forum in which public policies are proposed, debated and voted on.

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"When the government or any member claims that a budget presentation is needed outside the House well before it happens inside the House in order to communicate directly with the people or because of a perceived flaw in the parliamentary institution, there is a danger that the representative role of each and every member of this House is undermined, that respect for the institution is diminished, and that Parliament is rendered irrelevant. Parliamentary democracy is not vindicated by the government conducting a generally one-sided public relations event on the budget well in advance of members having an opportunity to hold the government to account for the budget in this chamber.

"I can well appreciate that parliamentary proceedings can be animated and often emotional, and they can be cumbersome. It may not be the most efficient of political systems, but it is a process that reflects the reality that members, like the people of Ontario, may not be of one mind on matters of public policy. A mature parliamentary democracy is not a docile, esoteric or one-way communications vehicle; it is a dynamic, interactive and representative institution that allows the government of the day to propose and defend its policies—financial and otherwise. It also allows the opposition to scrutinize and hold the government to account for those policies. It is an open, working and relevant system of scrutiny and accountability. If any members of this House have a problem with the concept of parliamentary democracy, then they have some serious explaining to do."

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean):** They changed Speakers.

**Mr Prue:** The Speakers have been changed but the tradition continues. I am sure that a Deputy Speaker would have come to the same ruling had he been so charged.

The last few lines of what Speaker Carr had to say are very telling and very important. "If any members of this

House" have a difficulty, then they need to really search their souls.

I have heard almost every speaker from the government side trying to defend the indefensible, to talk about why those traditions were gone around, to say that they were followed in some arcane way. We all sat here wondering what precisely they were talking about. Instead of standing up for democracy, you have stood up for your party. Instead of standing up for the rights of the people and for the representatives of the people in this House, you have stood up only for yourselves.

I would suggest that you start knocking on a few doors out there, you start going into your respective ridings and go door to door to door, and ask the people out there whether they thought holding a budget at Magna International was a good idea. While you're at it, ask them if they thought going around in a go-kart was a good idea for your party too. They might be a little illuminated on that one as well.

It should not be a surprise. This party has shown contempt not only for this House and the reason for the debate here for these past six days, but they have shown contempt for a great many things in their eight years as government—years of the Mike Harris regime and the year-plus of Mr Ernie Eves—not much has changed. Although we were all hoping for a kinder, gentler conservatism, that is certainly not what we're seeing here today. What we are seeing is contempt upon contempt upon contempt: contempt of this House; contempt of the traditions of this country, our people, our heritage, our British democracy; contempt of the history of this land, where there has been an uninterrupted debate on budget items—save and except, and I will admit, in unusual circumstances—for 136 years. They have not looked at the history at all. They have not looked at the tradition of parliamentary democracy and budget debates throughout the English-speaking world, in all of those countries of the Commonwealth where no one has ever, ever taken a budget outside of the Legislature, has never taken it out to car parts factories, and has never insulted the people of their lands in quite the same way that the Ontario government has done.

This should really come as no surprise. We have seen contemptuous actions by this government over the last eight years. The only one, as I said earlier, that I could find as contemptuous as this one was the whole debate around amalgamation. We can remember when the people of Toronto—of the six municipalities, as they then were—went to a referendum. We can remember when the populations of those six cities voted 75% no to amalgamation and had Minister Leach stand up in the House and say he was going to ignore the will of everyone who was speaking, everyone who had voiced a vote, everyone who had tried to preserve their democracies and had tried to preserve their way of dealing with city officials. We remember the contempt with which your government dealt with that—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Prue:**—as you are contemptuous of it today. The honourable minister is contemptuous of it to this very

day. They are contemptuous whenever people decide something that they, in their infinite wisdom, think they know better.

I will tell you, the people in Toronto knew better. We see today the mess of a city that you have created, a city which is in decline, a city where potholes aren't fixed, a city with garbage on the streets, a city with multiple problems, with the inability to raise taxes. You will see a city in disastrous decline, where people can no longer interface with their politicians and where everything seems to be going wrong.

You have shown your contempt as well for the people of Ontario throughout, first of all by marginalizing the poor, those who were on welfare, those who were on ODSP, those who were on fixed incomes and, mostly, you have shown the utmost contempt for those poor individuals, the poorest of the poor, those who live on our streets.

If anyone wants to see what contempt this government has shown to the people on our streets, one need only go out to the Eaton Centre, go out the back door and you will find the little Church of the holy Trinity. I would invite members opposite to go there to that little church and see precisely the contempt in which you hold the poor and precisely what your actions have resulted in since 1995. I would invite you to go there and look to the monument that is there, a little makeshift monument that gets added to weekly, of those poor unfortunate souls who die on our streets. You will see that it goes back into the 1980s. You will see that people unfortunately died on our streets in very small numbers in the 1980s and early 1990s—one or two a year. Now you will go out there—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to conclude the current debate in light of the fact that 63,500 schoolchildren are currently not in school and the question now be put by unanimous consent.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent to—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I heard a no.

**Mr Prue:** As I was stating before I was so rudely interrupted—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. The member for Beaches-East York has the floor.

**Mr Prue:** As I said, I invite the Tory members especially to go out and look at that little church and you will see the disaster your policies have had on the poorest of the poor. You will see how people who live on our streets no longer have the required medical care, the food or the housing in order to survive. You will see that in 1995, after years of having one or two die on the streets—which is lamentable, I have to tell you; it's one or two too much—you will see that it jumped to 15 in 1995, jumped to 50 in 1996 and has been above 50 people, one a week dying on the streets of Toronto every year of your government. If you want to know the contempt—

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues):** You're bragging about it. Shame on you.

**Mr Prue:** If you want to know the contempt, Madam Minister, then that is contemptible. That is the same kind of contempt you are showing to the House which you have already shown to the poor.

If they want to see more contempt, then you need only go to the cities of Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton where in a contemptuous action you got rid of the democratically elected school boards because they would not follow your bidding. They were willing to stand up and fight for the students. They were willing to take you on and do what was necessary in order to protect the students and make sure there were adequate teachers, adequate textbooks and computers and adequate janitors and secretaries. They were willing to take you on and they paid a political price because today they are literally powerless while your three supervisors call all the shots and make the cuts that are having a devastating effect on the people of those three cities.

If the members opposite would have the nerve to go out on to the streets—and I invite those government members from Toronto—I don't think there are any in Hamilton or Ottawa; oh, yes, Mr Baird in Ottawa—to go out and actually knock on doors and hear what people are saying about that. They are very upset, because they believe their school boards have been held in contempt. They believe that the people they elected do not have the authority to do what they need to do under local circumstances.

1550

If that were not enough, we also see the contempt with which this government deals with the cities of Ontario. I had an opportunity to read their election document that was released in the car parts factory. I was rather intrigued at the contempt that they continue to show cities. They offer and waggle out there the opportunity of a two-cent gas tax that will help the cities do something with transit and transportation, but they immediately say that that's not going to be possible unless everything that the government needs to do in all of the 480 or so municipalities in Ontario is done by binding referendum. We have seen the disaster that has caused in places like California and the cities in that state; we have seen the disasters it has caused all over the northeast United States. We know that no government, whether it be a junior level of government such as a municipality or a township or even another province, could ever expect to be held to such rules. Even traditional supporters of your party like Mayor McCallion are saying that this is wrong-headed, unworkable and sheer and utter contempt of elected democracies in this province. I would suggest you are showing the cities the same contempt that you are showing this House.

You have been contemptuous of tenants when they have come to you crying about how fast their rents are going up, clearly outpacing any way they have of paying those rents, clearly outpacing inflation and causing many



of them to become homeless. You are contemptuous when your hand-picked, appointed officials in the rent review tribunal summarily dismiss their appeals and they find themselves out on the streets to join the ever-increasing numbers of homeless. You are contemptuous of what they say and what they want. And when you start talking about what you are going to do should the people of this province give you another mandate, you surely leave them out.

You have been contemptuous of hydro ratepayers. You continue to talk about selling off Hydro, and I suppose that's where the \$2 billion from sales of other assets in your much-vaunted budget comes from. I suppose that's where it is, because you won't say, but we all know that's what you expect to get when you sell Hydro after the next election and after you've fooled the people yet again. But I think the people are far too smart for that.

You have been contemptuous of our nurses, calling them little more than Hula Hoop makers and saying that when their day is done, it is done. But you are finding out today, much to your chagrin, that their day is here, that we need them more than ever and that what you once held in contempt has come back to haunt you.

You have been contemptuous of our environment and have held those who speak on behalf of the environment in some amazing contempt. You have fired some of our best scientists, whom we need to look out for West Nile virus, whom we would need in case there are other Walkertons and whom we definitely would have needed and did need during the time of the SARS crisis.

You have been totally contemptuous of so many people. It should not come as a surprise to us that you are today again contemptuous of this House. For six days you have had an opportunity to stand up and say, "I am wrong." Had you said that on day one, had you said, "We are wrong and we won't do it again," had you said, "We understand from our constituents that this was not a good move," that somebody thought it might be cute but it ended up being too cute by half, then I'm sure this debate would not have lasted six days. We could have dealt with the throne speech; we could have dealt with the budget. But I will tell you, this debate is as important as or more important than those things, because this is about the future and the direction of democracy in this province. It is a direction that we should all strive to uphold and not try to bury under the rug, as has been done by the members opposite during this debate.

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment to the amendment to the motion brought forward by my colleague the member for Niagara Centre.

I am concerned, though, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention this at the outset of my remarks, that in the city of Toronto, there are 63,500 schoolchildren who are currently not in school. We have repeatedly tried to introduce legislation in this House today. The government House leader, Mr Stockwell, the member for Etobicoke Centre, asked for unanimous consent to wrap up

this debate. We could wrap up the debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion—

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** You're not supposed to filibuster yourself.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Well, just hear me out here. If we—  
*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** You don't need to learn. You know everything.

Who is keeping these 63,500 schoolchildren—we would need unanimous consent to go to introduction of bills, we'd have to conclude this debate, and the NDP won't give it. People out there want to know if they're empowered. Well, they are empowered. They can call Marilyn Churley. If people want to get the 63,500—call Marilyn Churley at 416-325-3250. They should call Marilyn Churley, because your kids could be back in school tomorrow if you just call Marilyn Churley at 416-325-3250.

**The Acting Speaker:** I would just like to remind the minister that we're speaking to the motion by the member from Niagara Centre.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. We're talking about contempt. We're talking about—

**Mr Duncan:** Where's the bill, John?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Oh, the member opposite asked where the bill is.

**Mr Martin:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was just wondering if the Minister of Energy would take a minute and call the people of Wawa; they're looking for you.

**The Acting Speaker:** That of course is not a point of order. The Minister of Energy.

**Hon Mr Baird:** It's funny; I get calls on this issue all the time from another member who's working for a resolution, not trying to make grandstanding out of it.

I read with great interest a press release saying that we were going to be debating Wawa today, and I came here to debate it. But these members opposite won't allow a debate on Wawa.

We would like to introduce this legislation. We have to conclude this debate on not just the amendment to the amendment to the motion, but the amendment to the motion and the motion; we're prepared to do that, but the opposition are thwarting that.

**Mr Duncan:** Where's the bill?

**Hon Mr Baird:** Let's go to introduction of bills.

What do we say to the 63,500 schoolchildren who are currently not in school? We can say, "Call Marilyn Churley at 416-325-3250."

**The Acting Speaker:** Minister, we're not going to go there. This is on the motion by the member from Niagara Centre.

**Hon Mr Baird:** The amendment says, "and its members." I know that all members of the House care about democracy and about playing a role in Parliament and that Parliament has the authority to do a lot of things. So, with respect to Mr Kormos's motion, he thinks we should not have a clear contempt of this House or its members.

People in Toronto have a member—and I know that on other issues, she has gotten the NDP to cave, and

we're hoping she'll do that this time because we very much want to see this debate end and to have introduction of bills and to debate. But that requires unanimous consent; nothing can happen on this today without unanimous consent. I believe that if there was a willingness by members on all sides of the House, members who are mentioned in Mr Kormos's amendment to the amendment to the motion—if all of us would agree, we could end this debate on the three questions before us: the amendment to the amendment, the amendment and the motion. We could end that, we could ask for unanimous consent to go to routine proceedings and have introduction of bills, and we could place the bill in this House and begin debating it almost immediately. But instead, we're debating the amendment to the amendment to the motion.

So I think taxpayers have to ask themselves what the priority is. Is it the amendment to the amendment to the motion and the other procedural issues before the House or is it the 63,500 schoolchildren? I think it's quite evident what it would be.

We are talking about this legislation. I think that if we were honest with each other, we could admit that all of us, each one of the 103 of us, could do a better job and contribute more to the effective operation of democracy and of this Parliament. I would say to you, Mr Speaker, and to those watching at home that they should beware of people who throw stones. We should look at their record.

1600

Well, I remember the last year the New Democrats were in power in Ontario. Other than the unemployment and poverty across the province, I remember that the Legislature itself only sat for 15 days—out of 365 days, only 15 days. There was no question period for the other 350 days, no introduction of bills, no debate. These advocates of contempt, where were they at that time? They were sitting around the cabinet table.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Not Peter.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Not Peter; I concede that. Where were they when the Legislature wasn't sitting for 350 days in the course of a year? They were nowhere. So this dial-up indignation is somewhat shallow.

I've listened with great interest to the speeches by the members of the official opposition. They say they believe in the House. We see that the Leader of the Opposition shows up for only one day a week. There are seven days in a week and he only shows up for one day. I think that's regrettable.

**Mr Duncan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't think it's appropriate for a member to be commenting on the attendance of another member in the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** That is a point of order. Minister?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I withdraw.

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Which Liberal member does not want us to talk about who hasn't showed up in the last little while? Just to be clear.

**The Acting Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'll say that I've been impressed with the way Dalton McGuinty travels this province when the

House is sitting. I have been impressed that six days out of seven, he is around the province listening to people. I won't mention where he has not been, Mr Speaker, because that would be unparliamentary.

I did notice that Dalton McGuinty, my friend from Ottawa, talks about strengthening democracy, talks about contempt. Do you know who the real contempt is for? There is the contempt by the Leader of the Opposition, by Dalton McGuinty, for the residents of Scarborough Centre, of Ottawa-Vanier, of Markham and of Brampton Centre where, like in a third-world dictatorship, the vote was cancelled at the nomination meetings. Good people who had come forward to run for office, to put their name on the ballot and put their future in the hands of the people—the nomination meeting was called and then it was cancelled.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** There was a nomination meeting; there was only one vote.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Yes. There was a nomination meeting but there was only one vote, the government House leader says. With the stroke of a pen, democracy ended in four ridings in this province. In Ottawa-Vanier, not only do they have a great member who sits in this House, a hard-working member, but they also had an individual who went to Harvard and Oxford and is well-regarded around town. His dream was to sit in this House. He came to a difficult decision, after weighing the costs to his career, to his personal life and to his family, and said, "I want to represent my community in the Legislative Assembly." He signed up for the nomination, registered as a candidate and went out and solicited the support of hundreds, potentially even thousands, of people so he could be a member of this House, much like Mr Kormos's amendment. A year into this exercise, the nomination meeting was cancelled. No vote.

**Mr Maves:** By whom?

**Hon Mr Baird:** By Dalton McGuinty. No vote. What type of places do they cancel elections and impose a candidate?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Robert Mugabe.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Robert Mugabe, one member says. Other members will think of other countries and jurisdictions.

I'll say this with great respect to every member of this House: we may like each other or we may dislike each other, we may agree or disagree on values, principles and policies, but no one was appointed to this House. We all had to come in through the front door. We all had to seek election in our home constituencies and our parties to get here. But that won't be the case in the next Parliament, because I believe there will be one or two people who didn't have to get nominated, who got in through the back door. That's a shame, that we're going to have candidates and that people won't have a choice. That is unfortunate. It does cause a lot of concern.

I was pleased to see the documents put forward to try to strengthen democracy in Ontario by Ernie Eves in his The Road Ahead document. The leader of the official opposition, Dalton McGuinty, wants more free votes. I say let's start in Ottawa-Vanier and have a free vote in



Ottawa-Vanier. When we're done that, let's go to Brampton Centre and let's have a free vote in Brampton Centre. When we're done that, let's go to Markham. Dalton, free the Liberal associations in these three ridings. Allow there to be a vote.

I'm very interested. The hard-working member for Scarborough Centre, Ms Mushinski, is here today. I'm confused because when Dalton ended democracy in Scarborough Centre there was a gentleman by the name of Costas Manios who had sought election in the past and was able to have a good, spirited debate in which the member for Scarborough Centre ended up as the victor. There are interesting things going around in Scarborough Centre. The member for Scarborough Centre showed me something she got in her mailbox that says "Vote Costas Manios," authorized by the Scarborough Centre Liberal association. You have the Liberal association presenting one Liberal candidate and you have Dalton McGuinty appointing another. It is going to be terribly confusing to people. So I say to Dalton McGuinty, if you want to have free votes, what better place to start than on election day? Let's see him do that.

I have this brochure here, "Costas Manios, Scarborough Centre"—a nice picture of the gentleman—with a Liberal logo on it. It says, "Authorized by the Scarborough Centre Provincial Liberal Association." If people want to see contempt shown to democracy, they should contact Mr Manios. He can be reached at 416-431-9998. Tell him to keep on fighting Dalton McGuinty, affectionately known as Dalton the Dictator in at least four constituencies in Ontario. But it is unusual that, for a man who talks about a democratic deficit in Ontario, his first act in implementing that agenda is to cancel votes in four ridings. I say to the members opposite, beware. He's got one left. There is one bullet left in the gun and any of you could be next. Any of those members on the other side could be next.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Dalton roulette.

**Hon Mr Baird:** That's dangerous. Dalton could have to appoint himself. It was a very close race in Ottawa South in the last election. It was supposed to be a Liberal town and the Conservative Party actually picked up two seats.

But the Liberals don't just have to appoint candidates; what they can also do is wave the gun around to scare people off.

**Mr Maves:** They do that.

**Hon Mr Baird:** "They do that," the member for Niagara Falls says.

Lee Farnworth, a woman in Nepean, wanted to seek election. Then the backroom boys came in and tried to intimidate her and push her aside and bring in another candidate. To give this woman credit, she's had the guts and the determination and she's not going to back down when Dalton McGuinty waves the appointment gun around. She's standing for nomination. Democracy? It's 4:10 and I have not checked to see whether Dalton has intervened and cancelled the vote, whether there will be a free vote. It could have happened this afternoon. I don't know if it did. We'll all have to wait and see.

**Interjection:** They kicked the guy out in Erie-Lincoln.

**Hon Mr Baird:** In Erie-Lincoln, they kicked the guy out there too. It's unbelievable.

Talking about Parliament and strengthening the institution and the contempt amendment to the motion, I did notice that Ernie Eves put out a platform where he said he disagrees with proportional representation. What the Liberals want to do is get rid of riding MPPs and just say that the party bigwigs will choose what order you are on the list. There will be no more ridings; we'll have what's called proportional representation. The backroom boys and the party machine really love this system because they don't have any democracy. They can just put people on the list, and if you do anything the leader doesn't like—remember when Alex Cullen was here? He disagreed with Dalton on one issue and they sent a hit squad to take him out in the nomination. Then when he voted against Dalton once—just once—out on his petard. He even ended up with the New Democrats. I notice he took a membership in the Liberal association to support Lee Farnworth. The member seems surprised. The former member, Mr Cullen, took out a membership in the Liberal Party. So New Democratic support is plunging in Ottawa West-Nepean, by Dalton the dictator.

1610

We noticed that they want to get rid of MPPs having ridings and just let the party brass decide. It's more efficient that way. Dalton and his backroom boys can make a list, and they'll know who's naughty and who's nice. If you disagree with Dalton, he'll put you as number 103. Rick Bartolucci would be high on that list, though, because he's a good soldier, a good lieutenant for Dalton McGuinty.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** I wouldn't even have made it on the list, I say to the member for Sudbury, if we had had that system in Ontario when I first ran.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I heard the minister say that one of our members was a dictator. I wonder if he could take that back, because it's unparliamentary.

**The Acting Speaker:** I would ask the minister if he would withdraw that remark.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I withdraw, Speaker.

Fundamentally antidemocratic: what do you call people who cancel free elections?

**Mr Maves:** Dalton McGuinty.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Dalton McGuintys. That's what you call them. I'm not saying any member of this House is a dictator, Mr Speaker, but people who cancel free elections—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** And I withdrew it. People who cancel free elections are dictators. I'm not pointing the finger at anyone, Mr Speaker. I'm not going to do that.

There are a lot of important things—instead of debating the amendment to the amendment to the motion, I wish members had given consent when the government

House leader rose to try to put an end to all three of these proceedings, not just one, and then we could go to introduction of bills. But that hasn't happened and that's indeed regrettable, because I am tremendously concerned, as I know Ernie Eves is tremendously concerned, about the 63,500 students—and I'd ask people to think about that: 63,500 students weren't in school today. While we were sitting here debating the amendment to the amendment to the motion, 63,500 kids weren't being instructed. They weren't being instructed in math, in science. They weren't being instructed in literature. They weren't being instructed in spelling, in history. I'm concerned about that.

The government has come forward with a bill that they want to introduce in this House, and the opposition won't let them. I think that's unfortunate. As Howard Hampton walks this crowd over the cliff—they're all behind him; I'll give them that. They're all lined up right behind him to go over the cliff, even Marilyn Churley. I don't understand why Marilyn Churley won't allow introduction of bills and won't allow debate to get these kids back in the classroom.

I talked to a friend of mine who knows a teacher, and for this teacher, it's her first year—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** In the Toronto Catholic board, yes. Of the 73 school boards in Ontario, in that one board that's out.

This individual got involved in education to teach, and she wants to be back in the classroom. She's disappointed that her board has locked her out. She heard at 12 o'clock that there was a little bit of good news coming down the pipe to help get her back in the classroom and to help allow her to teach her children in her classroom. But alas, Marilyn Churley has said, "No. You'll have to stay out." That's very regrettable.

I noticed when we debated other issues, like garbage, where we gave unanimous consent to get the garbage collectors back to work, these members opposite quickly melted. Surely our children are more important than the garbage in this city. Surely our children demand and need to be back in the classroom. The members of the third party, including Marilyn Churley, should back down. Rosario Marchese should back down. Michael Prue should back down.

If people want to effect that change, you have the power. Get on the phones. Call these individuals. Tell them you want them to fix it. Michael Prue: 325-1303. Rosario Marchese: 325-9092. Marilyn Churley: 325-3250. If people want to see these children back in the classroom, I beg of you, pick up the phone and call them. It has worked in the past, and I know it'll work again.

I want to congratulate my House leader, the member for Etobicoke Centre, who was working all day and all weekend on this initiative to get these kids back in class. If we prevail, we will continue the fight.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The member for Perth-Middlesex.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** Excuse me for a minute.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I find the proceedings today interesting. I've just watched two Conservative members get up and take 40 minutes of the debate, and complain that opposition members are debating. This has to be the first time that a government has filibustered itself.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to conclude the current debate in light of the fact that 63,500 schoolchildren are currently not in school, and that the question now be put.

**Interjections:** No.

**The Acting Speaker:** I heard a no.

**Mr Hampton:** As I was saying, this has to be the first time in history that a government has filibustered itself, that a government puts up speakers to protract the debate, and then complains that somebody is extending the debate.

There's another unbelievable aspect to this.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You don't even know the rules, Howie.

**Mr Hampton:** This is the government House leader, who has never, ever been the least bit embarrassed about using time allocation or imposing closure on the Legislature. This is a government that routinely has used time allocation to limit debate and has routinely used closure.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent—

**The Acting Speaker:** Please be seated.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Why? It's a different point of order. I seek unanimous consent that the question now be put.

**Hon Mr Baird:** End the debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** He's asked for unanimous consent. No.

**Mr Hampton:** If the leader of the government in the House wants to bring a closure motion, he knows he can bring that. He has never been embarrassed about bringing a closure motion before. He has never been embarrassed about, in effect, shortening the time for debate before.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** How many fairies—

**The Acting Speaker:** If I have to warn the government House leader again—I'm sorry, I apologize to the member for Kenora-Rainy River.

**Mr Hampton:** We have government member after government member standing up and extending the debate, and then we have the government House leader complaining that his own members are extending the debate. I challenge the government House leader to look at the number of Conservatives who have spoken to this debate. I'm sure it numbers over 30. There are only nine New Democrats who have spoken to the debate. Who's extending the debate, when 30 Conservatives have gotten up, ad nauseam, when we've just heard two Conservatives here? One more attempted to get up, but somehow I guess he couldn't figure out what he was supposed to say.

**Ms Churley:** The House leader made him sit down.



**Mr Hampton:** Don't complain to the people of Ontario about extending the debate, when it's your own members who are extending the debate.

**Mr Johnson:** Point of order: I just wanted to allow the leader of the third party to correct himself. Because I gave the floor to allow him to speak, I don't think that he should cast aspersions on—

**The Acting Speaker:** Oh, you yielded the floor. The leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to raise some serious issues in this whole contempt motion, and it's interesting that the Minister of Energy just spoke, because since the House has come back, I have been raising whenever I can the issue of how this government is treating the citizens of Wawa. Let me give you an example of what in fact is happening. There are no less than six hydro generating stations in close proximity to Wawa. A number of them are within the municipal boundaries of the municipality there. It costs about a half a cent a kilowatt hour to generate electricity at these power dams, but under this government's disastrous scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation, the people of Wawa, the hydro consumers of Wawa, are paying not a half a cent a kilowatt hour for their electricity; they are paying the equivalent of 22 times that cost of production of a half a cent a kilowatt hour.

1620

This government believes that is fair and equitable. Let me say, that shows the contempt of this government for the people of Wawa. It shows the contempt of this government for the businesses of Wawa. It shows the contempt of this government for all of those hard-working people who are only seeking fairness and justice from a system of hydro privatization and deregulation that is completely denying that.

I want to shed some light on some of the other things that are happening in the environs of Wawa. You see, the private company that owns the generating stations, the transmission lines, the distribution lines, is none other than Brascan. I want the good people of Wawa—in fact, I want everybody in Ontario—to know the cozy, intimate relationship between the Ernie Eves government and the Conservatives and Brascan Corp.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask you to rule. We have two orders. We have order number 1, which is the amendment to the amendment to the motion brought forward by the member for Niagara Centre, and we have order number 2, which the member opposite is debating, the wrong order. I wonder if you could say whether he is debating the issue in front of the House. I'm happy to debate order number 2 if you want to—

**The Acting Speaker:** As you know, we are debating the motion by the member for Niagara Centre relating to the contempt motion by Mr Conway. That is the order we're debating, and I'm sure the leader of the third party will directly relate his comments to the motion by his colleague the member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr Hampton:** I think the Minister of Energy is trying to waste time here and extend debate. I want to get down to the issue of contempt.

Let me show you just how contemptuous this government has been. You see, that company in Wawa that is literally robbing people blind by charging them 22 times more—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I seek unanimous consent to put the question on the two amendments and the main motion and then to move to orders of the day so we can debate this important issue to the people of Wawa.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Baird has asked for unanimous consent. I'm afraid I heard a no. The leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to refer to the contempt that this government has shown for the people of Wawa. As I was saying, Brascan owns the generating stations, the transmission lines, the distribution lines. Brascan charges the people of Wawa more than 22 times what it costs to produce the electricity and the people of Wawa are probably wondering—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I rose two points of order ago to request that the honourable member be called to order for not speaking to the question before the House and he's continually doing the opposite.

**The Acting Speaker:** I am certain that the leader of the third party will relate his comments directly to the motion in front of us. I was thinking he was getting there.

**Mr Hampton:** I am illustrating the kind of contempt this government has shown for the Legislature and for the people of Ontario, and I'm speaking by way of illustration for the people of Wawa.

I want people to understand the very intimate relationship between Ernie Eves and the Conservative government and the Brascan Corp that is ripping people off in Wawa. What it amounts to is this: not only does Brascan own those generating stations but, thanks to the generosity of the Conservative government to their corporate friends, they were able to pick up four more generating stations on the Mississagi River for a very cheap price. People might wonder, how do you get the government of Ontario to sell you four hydro dams and four generating stations for about one tenth the cost of building those generating stations. Here's how it's done—this shows further contempt. During the Conservative leadership race, which was held a year ago in January, February and March, you contribute \$140,000 to Ernie Eves's leadership campaign, which is what Brascan did. Imagine: one corporation and its affiliates contributed \$140,000 just to Mr Eves's leadership campaign in January, February and March. At the end of March, after Mr Eves becomes leader of the Conservative Party and Premier, you get the generating stations for about one tenth of what it would cost to build the generating stations. Then, in May, when the government deregulates the price of electricity, you get to drive the price of electricity through the roof and in three months—July, August and September—you make an \$8.8-million

profit, selling the power from those hydro dams. That shows contempt: contempt for the people of Wawa and contempt for the people of Ontario.

But get this: Brascan wants to make even more money. If you review the fact sheet they put out boasting about their \$8.8-million profit from those four hydro dams, they disclose that what they want to do next is export electricity into the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor in the United States and make even more money. This truly shows contempt: contempt for the hard-working people of Wawa, who are being forced to pay 22 times the cost of producing the electricity, and contempt for all the other consumers in the province.

What is equally unbelievable about this is that because these hydro dams, many of them located within the municipal jurisdiction of Wawa, are so close to the town site, there's actually no transmission cost. This isn't a case of having to transmit electricity 200 or 300 kilometres to market. There is no transmission cost, because the community is right next to the power dams. There's no huge cost of distribution. The distribution lines were built many years ago. The distribution lines—again, a very compact community.

But when you add it all up, under this government's disastrous policy of hydro privatization and deregulation, the people of Wawa are being forced to pay 22 times—22 times—what it costs to generate electricity at hydro dams within their own municipality. That's the result of hydro privatization and deregulation, and that is the kind of contempt this government is showing for those people and for many other hydro consumers in the province.

That contempt was taken further by this government's decision to attempt to escape public scrutiny, to escape the scrutiny of the British parliamentary process, when they decided to take the budget and not present it here in the Legislature but present it in a car parts factory. That is the kind of contempt that has been shown, and that is why people are so angry.

I say to the government House leader again, and I say to the Minister of Energy, if the government wants to end this debate, the government could call closure today. Everyone knows how the process works here. The government has the majority. The government determines what gets debated each day. We wanted to debate Wawa today. We wanted to debate our opposition resolution on Wawa. That's what was scheduled. The government said no, they would continue with the contempt motion. The government has the majority; the government can decide this question right now. But the government chooses to play games and show further contempt for the people of Ontario.

The government wants to come in here today and say to some of the parents whose children attend separate schools here in Toronto—the government wants to pretend they're going to solve the problem. If the government wanted to present their legislation, they could call closure on the debate right now, because they have the majority and they could decide the question here and now. This government, once again, is playing games with people and showing the utmost of contempt.

Imagine: the Minister of Energy, the government House leader, complaining that the debate is going on and yet it's their own government members who have been standing up and extending the debate. Who has spoken most to these motions? If you do the tally, government members have done more to extend the debate on this than anyone else in the Legislature. Once again, a government showing contempt, believing it can pull the wool over people's eyes, believing it can somehow simply issue a press release or a spin line, and once again take advantage of and show contempt for people. I have news for you: people are on to your games. People are on to your games about hydroelectricity and the fact that a billion and a half dollars have been spent now in this province through the back door to subsidize the private hydro generation companies that you have brought into the province. People pay what's on their bill and then they pay a further billion and a half dollars a year off the hydro bill to pay for this very expensive privatized hydroelectricity. People are on to that game.

People are on to your games around education. You are the government that has done more to create conflict in the schools, in the classroom. You go out and you deliberately attack teachers—the very people whom we depend upon to deliver in the education system.

I ask people across Ontario, do you really think we could improve the health care system if the government went out every day and attacked the nurses and the doctors? Obviously not. Do you really think we could improve policing if the government went out every day and attacked police officers? Obviously not. Do you really think we could improve the practice of dentistry if the government went out every day and attacked the dentists? Obviously not. But it has been a routine government strategy to go out every day and attack teachers, and pretend in doing so that they're going to improve our schools and the education that our children receive—again, showing contempt for the people of Ontario, playing silly spin games with the people of Ontario.

Why don't you come here to the Legislature, admit that your whole strategy of taking the budget, trying to avoid parliamentary scrutiny, scrutiny by the Legislature, and presenting it in a car parts factory—why don't you admit that that showed contempt for the parliamentary process, for the people of Ontario? Why don't you admit you were wrong? You did something wrong. Then we can get back to the business that we all want to be here for.

We can be debating how badly you've treated the people of Wawa in terms of escalating their hydro prices to the point where they're now paying 22 times the cost of production. We can come here and talk about all the schools you're closing across Ontario this year. We can talk about all the schools that don't have adequate textbooks. We can talk about how many schools across this province are being forced to cut programs, whether it be full-time librarians, physical education teachers, music teachers or art teachers; or how many schools in this province don't have a full-time principal.



You have the majority in this Legislature. If you wanted to today, you could come in and call for closure. You could set what happens in terms of the debate. So stop playing games with the people of Ontario. Stop showing contempt for the people of Ontario. Stop complaining about someone extending debate when it's your own members who—whether in their own speaking time, or who get up routinely, as the Minister of Energy does, and interrupt people—in fact extend the debate.

If you have an agenda, if you have legislation you want to present, table it. Table it so that we can see it, so that the press can see it, so that it is clear on its face. But don't come in here and blame other people for extending the debate when it has been your members who have spoken most often and have spoken at the greatest length to the motion that is before us. Don't complain about that when you as the government can at any time exercise your majority. You decide what gets debated in this Legislature every day. You call the orders; you make those decisions. Don't pretend otherwise for the people of Ontario. Stop showing contempt for the Legislature; stop showing contempt for the people of Ontario; stop playing games.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** It's curious to hear the previous member speak. Two very clear things have come to mind after hearing the speech from the leader of the third party.

First, he has no idea how the rules work in this House, which is—

**Hon Mr Baird:** The House didn't sit when they were in government. How would he know?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** That's probably true. The House didn't sit when he was in government so he probably wouldn't need to know the rules.

Here's a little briefing, a little primer on the rules. Unless you give us consent—that means the entire House agrees—to put the motion and revert back to orders of the day, we can't introduce a bill. That's the rule. Why don't one of you backbenchers over there sally up to the bench where these black-robed sorts are—they're called clerks—and ask them the question? They'll give you the answer. The answer is—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** —I certainly didn't demean my black-robed friends. They will give you the answer, "That's extremely correct." Unless you get consent, we can't introduce the back-to-work legislation for those 63,500 students.

The second thing that struck me when Mr Hampton spoke is he's begging me to move closure. Talk about the tables being reversed.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Couldn't he move it?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** He could move closure. The Liberals can move closure. Any member of this House can move closure. You've got the spectacle of the leader of the third party saying, "I beg you to move closure."

What are we being accused of? Mr Conway put the motion with respect to contempt and we, as honourable members, made the decision that this is a very important motion. We think that if you want to speak to it you should be allowed to speak to it. That's parliamentary

tradition and parliamentary democracy. How many speakers have we had? Seventy-six speakers to the motion before the House today. And the shame of it all is, Lyn McLeod, you don't even know the rules. I need consent.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** No. That's wrong. They know the rules. Take the time and ask them. They'll tell you the rules, Lyn. They're not but three feet from you. You just have to lean over and whisper and you'd know the rules. They're paid to tell you. If you went over and said, "Gee, did they need consent to put the motion and then revert back to introduction of bills?" they'd say, "Oh yeah, they need that." Lean forward three feet.

Now, here's the question—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Not if the debate stops. And this is another part of the rules you should know. Lean forward and ask them this: if this debate ends, what happens? We vote on that amendment. Then we start again on the second amendment and then they can move another amendment and they can do it all again, Lyn. They can all do it again.

They've moved a couple of amendments already. They've spoken two, three, four times already. They won't give us consent to adjourn the debate; they won't give us consent to put the question; they won't give us consent to file the bill; and they won't give us consent to debate the bill.

1640

Why all of a sudden do you think, just because they're there, they're not co-operating? Of course they're not. They don't want the bill. They don't want the back-to-work legislation. They don't want to see the bill. They don't want to hear about the bill. They want those kids out of school. That's their plan.

If you want to twist the rules around so that somehow we have the power to do something we don't, that's fine, but you're complicit with this gang of nine.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Don't tie yourselves to that gang of nine, Lyn. It's that gang of nine that's keeping 63,500 kids out of school. Sever the tie.

Seventy-six speakers, 25 hours. This has been debated fully. We cannot be accused of not following parliamentary tradition. We cannot be accused of closing down debate. What we're accused of today by Howard Hampton, the party that keeps putting amendments, prolonging the debate is—he's begging me to move closure.

**Interjection:** Do it.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You move closure, if it's so important. Why don't you give us consent to revert back to bills? You won't.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You won't.

I say to the members opposite, I seek—I'll do it slowly. I seek unanimous consent—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Hold on, hold on. Let's explain this to the viewers out there. What I need is consent to

allow the debate for 63,500 schoolchildren who are not in school. I have to get consent from everyone in this House. Everybody has to say, "Yes, it's important that those 63,500 kids go back to school. Yes, we've debated this, 76 speakers for 25 hours. Yes, we should get back to orders of the day, and yes, we should introduce a bill to get these kids back to school." That's what happening, folks.

I want you to be very clear: I seek unanimous consent to conclude the current debate in light of the fact that 63,500 schoolchildren are currently not in school and that the question now be put so that we may introduce a bill to bring that issue to a close in this House.

**Ms Churley:** What bill? We haven't seen a bill.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Let's introduce it. It'll be printed. It'll be on the Internet.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** That's what I seek consent for.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Churley:** Show us the bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Stockwell has asked for—

**Mr Prue:** No.

**The Acting Speaker:** I heard a no. Minister.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Folks, that's what I'm up against.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Michael Prue said no.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Marilyn Churley said no, 325-3250; Rosario Marchese said no, 325-9092; Michael Prue said no, 325-1303. All you parents out there—

**The Acting Speaker:** Minister, you probably want to be discussing the amendments before the Legislature.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I'm doing my best.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** All you parents out there who have children who aren't in school today should phone those three numbers, because this House works under orders and procedures and the orders and procedures make it impossible for the government to introduce a bill—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** The Minister of Energy is not being very helpful—and the member for Toronto-Danforth. The Minister of the Environment has the floor.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Thank you. We can't do that unless we get unanimous consent. It's humorous to Churley. I know why: because she doesn't give a damn about the 63,500 kids who aren't in school today.

**The Acting Speaker:** Minister, do you want to withdraw?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I withdraw "damn" and replace it with "darn."

**The Acting Speaker:** We would also understand that using the proper name of a member is out of order.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** If I called Marilyn Churley "Marilyn Churley," I meant to call her Toronto-Danforth, and I apologize.

Call the member for Toronto-Danforth. Call them at their offices, because unless they say yes to that consent motion, we can't introduce the bill; we can't begin debate; we can't begin the process of getting 63,500 children—

**Ms Churley:** You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You, my friend, should be ashamed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Let me remind the minister that all comments should be made through the Speaker.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** And we're not supposed to heckle, right?

**The Acting Speaker:** That is also correct.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Thank you.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** We're also not supposed to bait the bears.

**Hon Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth said you're not allowed to come in here and speak untruths. I think the member is an honourable member. I know she'll want to admit that and withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker:** I did not hear that, but if the member said something she wishes to withdraw, she may.

**Hon Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Speaker: I said that if she was an honourable member, she'd want to withdraw, but I guess I'm not correct.

**The Acting Speaker:** This is getting a little bit silly in here. Let us just return to the normal rules of debate. Let us be talking about the motion by the member for Niagara Centre to the main motion by Mr Conway.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I understand there has been a wide latitude in this debate for the 76 speakers and 24 hours. I always knew the member for Toronto-Danforth to be an honourable member. I know what she said and she knows what she said. She refused to withdraw and I think that's unfortunate for the decorum of this House and contemptible by a member in this House.

I also want to say to those parents in Toronto's separate school board that it will happen; it will happen because we will close debate on this today. It's unfortunate. I thought we could act as parliamentarians and deal with this in a very diplomatic way. I asked all the House leaders during the process. I'm loath to move contempt. I'm loath to move closure.

**Ms Churley:** Loath to move contempt?

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I'm loath to move closure. Try and calm yourself.

**The Acting Speaker:** Through the Speaker, please.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Through the Speaker, try and calm yourself.

I was loath to put the question. I didn't want to put the question. I thought that it was an important landmark decision by the Speaker and that everyone should be given an opportunity to speak to it. It's a shame.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I'm telling you, that's what the policy position was, and I think we did: 76 speakers, 24 hours of debate. Obviously, there is a process in here that means we can't get consent to do business of the House. We're obviously not going to have closure to this debate because the rules allow—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Listen, John, the rules allow for an infinite number of amendments to be put once they're



disposed of. So once we dispose of the amendment that's on the floor today, they'll simply put another one in its place, and all nine will speak again.

It's shameful that they're acting this way. You're talking about contempt? You're talking about tradition? You're talking about fairness of parliamentarians and honourable members? That's how they treat this. They have no parliamentary tradition. For instance, a member just said something unparliamentary—everybody heard her—and she won't even take it back. Talk about contempt. They want to sell this off as some kind of package because they want us to move closure. They want us to put the question, so they'll dial up their synthetic indignation and claim, "Oh, the world's falling apart. It's a terrible thing because they only allowed 76 speakers,, 24 hours of debate and we wanted to keep going." God forbid, they're doing this because they don't want 63,500 kids to get back to school. Shame on whom? Shame on you. Shame on you and your party for all those parents who are being put under unnecessary aggravation, an unnecessary burden that's very difficult for those with young children. They are at home and you're standing here playing parliamentary games; that's what you've reduced it to.

Look, let's be clear: the Liberals are no better. They were playing parliamentary games, and now they figured, "Oh my gosh, we're going to get 20 calls," so they capitulated. Well, OK, they capitulated, but they were no better with respect to this debate either. There isn't an ounce of integrity on that side of the House when it comes to parliamentary tradition and rules; there's not an ounce of integrity. It's all politics.

*Laughter.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I appreciate that you find that humorous. You have your House leader filing silly, ridiculous amendments that make no sense whatsoever, that provide no insight and no knowledge to the motion. One of his amendments said, "and its members." That was his amendment. Well, why do you file an amendment that says, "and its members"? Because you want to prolong the debate, keep it going and keep 63,500 kids out of school. Shame on you. Shame on all of you. You want to play this thing, so play it. You got the chance.

**Hon Mr Baird:** They're laughing.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** They are; they're laughing. That's how bad it is.

**Ms Churley:** You keep filibustering.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** There's Churley chirping away again. Are you going to call me another name you won't withdraw?

So here we have the contemptuous actions of the opposition in order to simply make a point that they don't want the kids to go back to school.

**Ms Churley:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to point out to the member speaking that I don't chirp, I roar.

**The Acting Speaker:** Interesting, but not a point of order.

1650

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You must have been on the high school debating team. You roar? Chirp?

**Ms Churley:** I consider that a sexist comment, so watch your mouth.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** That's not roaring, Marilyn; that's conduct unbecoming an honourable member, and I don't think you should say those things. You bring the respect of this House down by making those allegations against another honourable member.

We've had 76 speakers and 25 hours of debate. We've had numerous speakers who went two and three times. We've spent all day seeking unanimous consent to see if we could put the question so we could introduce a bill by consent. We weren't given it. We've reached a stage now where the NDP is playing such political games with children's lives.

You know what makes me so upset? When you think back to when they were in office—the exact same crowd, minus Prue—you'd think they didn't do this. You wouldn't think they actually ordered teachers back to work. Well, when they were in office and they had the levers of power, they did—three times. Every one of them did it. On the way to Damascus, they found their moral compass and ethics, because they want to block this government from saving the school year of 63,500 kids. So it astounds me how you can sit in your place and block and filibuster and make terrible changes so that we can't get a bill passed that you yourselves passed.

**Ms Churley:** You are filibustering yourself.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Marilyn, what's the point in going through the rules again with you, for God's sake. OK, say we put the question and we get the closure motion; we'd still need consent to go back to introduce the bills, and he says he won't do it. So, gosh, get it through your head: it doesn't matter what we do. We need consent and he won't give it.

**Ms Churley:** You haven't shown us the bill, Chris.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** You know why? It's not tabled, Marilyn. This is in the standing orders: you must table a bill. We table it and then you read it. That's how it works.

**Ms Churley:** Oh, so that's the way it works.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** This is news to you? You didn't know that's how we introduce bills? What do you think they do when they stand up and say, "First reading of the bill"? What do you think is going on? Seriously.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Don't make fun of the Clerks.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** No, the Clerks are darn good. I didn't say "damn," I said they're darn good. But what did you think was going on?

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Marilyn, I remember showing you a bill once that you promised you wouldn't show anybody, and you walked right out and showed it to CP. So God forbid, why should I want to show you anything?

**Ms Churley:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that the member from Etobicoke stop personally attacking my integrity. What he just said is not true.

**The Acting Speaker:** We all know we should not attack members personally, however—Minister.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** We're not allowed to attack members personally in here? Boy, question period is going to be an interesting time, I'll tell you, from here on in.

Finally, considering there have been 76 speakers, 25 hours of debate, I ask that the question now be put.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1655 to 1725.*

**The Acting Speaker:** All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Eves, Ernie	Molinari, Tina R.
Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Gravelle, Michael	O'Toole, John
Bountrogianni, Marie	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Boyer, Claudette	Hardeman, Ernie	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Hudak, Tim	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Jackson, Cameron	Phillips, Gerry
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Ramsay, David
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Cleary, John C.	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Kennedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sterling, Norman W.
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Stewart, R. Gary
Cordiano, Joseph	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
DeFaria, Carl	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	McLeod, Lyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ecker, Janet	McMeekin, Ted	Wood, Bob
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Young, David

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 81; the nays are 8.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Mr Conway has moved that this House declares that it is the undoubted right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1728 to 1730.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. I have received a letter from the chief whip of the third party requesting that the vote on this motion be deferred until routine proceedings tomorrow.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of this House to revert to introduction of bills for the sole purpose of introducing back-to-work legislation for the teachers in the Toronto separate school system.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Stockwell has asked for unanimous consent to introduce a bill on the Catholic school board in Toronto. Agreed? I heard a no.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sorry, I'm trying to seek another consent motion. I seek unanimous consent to introduce the bill now to order the teachers back to work, rather than revert to introduction of bills.

**The Acting Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent to introduce the bill now? No, we do not.

## OPPOSITION DAY

### ELECTRICITY DEREGULATION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** We are at opposition day number 2.

The member for Niagara Centre on a point of order.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** Speaker, it's obvious that it's now past 4 of the clock; indeed, it's 5:32. I seek your help and your assistance in helping members of the House determine how best to conduct the remainder of the day's proceedings, and that is as to what constitutes a sessional day.

Standing order 41(a) says, "There shall be six sessional days allotted to the debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne..." and standing order 42(a), "... five sessional days to be known as opposition days," yet nowhere in the standing orders is there provision for defining a sessional day when it's as compressed and artificially brief as this one is.

**The Acting Speaker:** I appreciate your interjection; however, under the standing orders, there is no definition. All that's required is that the opposition day be called at 4 o'clock or after. I understand your point. We're in opposition day number 2, moved by the leader of the third party.

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if you could advise the House whether the mover of the motion, whom you just identified as Mr Hampton—does the fact that he's not present constitute an obstacle to proceeding this afternoon?

**The Acting Speaker:** You are correct. We need consent for someone to move the motion on Mr Hampton's behalf. Do I have—



**Mr Kormos:** On a point of order, Speaker: You indicated in your introduction to this that Mr Hampton moved the resolution. I put to you that the Speaker, then, has in fact, de facto, indicated that Mr Hampton has moved the resolution, and to challenge it at this point is moot. You are functus, sir.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. As you would know, we are in opposition day number 2. The time will be divided equally among the three parties. The leader of the third party.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** The motion:

"Be it resolved that in the opinion of this House the government must act immediately to eliminate the severe hardship it has caused to customers of Great Lakes Power in Wawa and elsewhere as a direct result of electricity deregulation.

"The government must deliver immediate assistance to compensate the affected customers in full for the extra transmission and distribution costs they have paid as a result of deregulation. This must nullify the order that the affected customers pay based on cost of service and ensure that from now on they pay the same regulated rate as they paid prior to deregulation.

"The government must also implement the NDP plan for public power and bring an end to electricity deregulation and privatization which is costing hundreds if not thousands of jobs in electricity-dependent sectors across Northern Ontario.

"This House supports the NDP plan which includes ending privatization and closing the wholesale electricity market while regulating the rate for the electricity commodity on the basis of power-at-cost and pursuing an aggressive program of energy conservation and renewable power development.

Allow me, very briefly, to reiterate what I was able to say here earlier today. The result of this government's policy of electricity deregulation and privatization for the people of Wawa is that they're paying, on their hydro bills, an amount that is equivalent to more than 22 times the cost of actually producing the hydroelectricity. Wawa has, within its municipal boundaries, a number of power dams that generate electricity. We are told that the cost of generating electricity at these power dams is in the neighbourhood of half a cent a kilowatt hour. Certainly it doesn't cost a lot of money to then transmit this hydro a distance of three or four or five kilometres to the people of Wawa. Yet, if you take the generating charge, the transmission charge and the distribution charge on people's hydro bills, people are being charged an exorbitant amount for electricity that is very inexpensive to produce as a result of the phenomenon of falling water.

What we're calling for here today is that the Conservative government of Ontario recognize that its policy of hydro privatization and deregulation has been nothing less than a disaster, a fiasco—certainly a fiasco for the people of Wawa and the people of the Wawa environs.

Let me give an example of the kind of situation that is happening. Earl Dereski is a small landlord who is being

threatened with disconnection by the private power company Brascan and its affiliate Great Lakes Power because he and his wife owe the company a hydro bill of \$10,000. The reason they owe a hydro bill of \$10,000 is that their monthly hydro bill has more than doubled as a result of hydro privatization and deregulation.

This situation has effectively now shut down one shift at Dubreuil Forest Products, which is located near Wawa, once again because the forest products company cannot afford to pay the substantially increased hydro bill. There are only two food stores in the community, one of which is about to shut down—it cannot afford to pay its hydro bill—and a number of other businesses in the community have expressed real concern about their capacity to continue, once again because they cannot afford to pay their hydro bills. In other words, as a result of this government's wrong-headed scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation, the community of Wawa is facing severe economic decline.

I want to point out that what we see in Wawa is perhaps the purest form of hydro deregulation and privatization in the province. It is one of those communities where a private company, Brascan, a major contributor to the Conservative Party and a major contributor to Ernie Eves's leadership campaign, literally owns the generation, the transmission and the distribution. This is significant for people across Ontario, because what you see happening in Wawa represents what electricity privatization and deregulation looks like when it is fully implemented.

1740

When private, profit-driven corporations have full control of hydroelectric generation, transmission and distribution, this is what happens. Hydro bills rise substantially. The price of hydroelectricity becomes a very expensive item for people—in fact, an item which is simply not affordable for many businesses, industries and residential consumers in the community.

So we call upon the government to at last recognize what a disaster, what a fiasco, hydro privatization and deregulation has been for the people of Wawa; secondly, to recognize that it is negatively affecting a lot of other communities. Relent, give it up, and recognize that hydro privatization and deregulation has been a disaster.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Further debate?

**Hon Mr Baird:** I welcome the opportunity to discuss what is a very important issue for people in Wawa and the surrounding areas. It is an important one. I regret that we weren't able to start to debate this issue earlier today, when we could have had a more fulsome exchange of ideas.

I would want to suggest to the leader of the third party that I think what's required here is a constructive approach to try to deal with a legitimate challenge facing small business people.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** One of the members for a neighbouring riding, who has never even called me on this

issue, not like the member who represents that community, likes to bark. Maybe if he'd listen, he might learn something. He's not really here for a debate.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** The member opposite is an interesting individual. He comes in here and he's determined—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Member, come to order.

**Hon Mr Baird:** He's not even in his seat. It's unfortunate that he doesn't take the time to inform himself of these views. He actually might be able to learn something. I think that's regrettable that he isn't.

I have appreciated the involvement of one of the members of the official opposition, who has I think tried to be far more constructive than has the third party. I think that's what's required to solve problems.

I do take great offence at the comments made by the leader of the third party, with respect to him trying to suggest any impropriety with respect to the public disclosure of campaign contributions. I think it's beneath him. I think it's, frankly, beneath the political party he represents. It's nothing new with that member, and that's unfortunate.

He likes to leave the impression that Great Lakes Power was somehow recently privatized. In fact, it's been operating for many years as a privatized local distribution company. It continues to be.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** Regulated, John. Regulated.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Transmission and distribution are still fully regulated, I say to the member opposite. It's unfortunate that if the New Democratic Party felt so strongly about this, they didn't take action when they were in government. I think that's one of the realities. Certainly the member for Sault Ste Marie—they tried to block his bill and wouldn't let his bill pass. I think it probably speaks to his effectiveness as a member in this place. I did want to put that on the record.

Great Lakes Power has announced its commitment to residential customers, to reduce it by 20%. I would label that a good start. I think more has to be done. I am disappointed, as I know the member for Algoma-Manitoulin will be, that we don't have more time, because the NDP filibustered and tried to stop this debate from taking place today. I came prepared to debate it as early as three o'clock and have a fulsome exchange of ideas.

On a very serious note, I say to the member opposite that if he wanted a legitimate, serious debate on the issue, the resolution that he proposed, saying that it would not only deal with the legitimate challenges that small businesses and working families have in this community—would not have been political, partisan and put support for the NDP platform in his resolution. I think that's unfortunate. I think it shows that he and his party are more committed to playing politics on what is a very serious and legitimate issue.

We had a very productive meeting with the member in question. He came in and met with officials in my office

and the ministry. We are looking at a number of options with respect to some further remedial action that can be taken in addition to the 20%. I think that, certainly as the resolution contemplates, those solutions are required sooner rather than later. I would like to have supported the resolution had it not adopted the New Democratic Party's platform, which is on the extreme of feeling in this House. But we will continue to work with this local distribution company, not just on the legitimate distribution and transmission rates but on the other associated rates.

The member opposite says that electricity can be produced for half a cent a kilowatt hour. I don't think there's anywhere in the world where electricity can be produced for half a cent a kilowatt hour. I think that is—

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** Disneyland.

**Hon Mr Baird:** Disneyland or Wonderland, the member for Ottawa Centre interjects. Maybe in his utopian world we could produce non-emission power for as little as half a cent. I would be concerned if we started to adopt a differentiated rate like the member opposite says, because if there is a generating station near the community, it should get a cheaper rate. If we adopted that policy in all government services, what would that do to postage rates? What would that do to a range of services like health care and education?

I would say that Ernie Eves and this government are committed to working with the residents of this community in short order to come forward with such additional measures that might prove to assist them. I look forward to working with the member for Algoma on this issue.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** Unfortunately we don't have very much time to debate this resolution, and I'm certainly pleased on behalf of my constituents that it is before the Legislature, however briefly.

Clearly, the 11,000 or so customers of Great Lakes Power in the district of Algoma have been subjected by this government to electricity rates that, in some cases, have doubled the cost to consumers. That is a huge hardship in the constituency. We have worked very hard with individuals across the Great Lakes Power area, and I want to thank my staff—Tom Farquhar, Anne Marie Guimond and Eva Tomalin—who have dealt with literally hundreds of complaints and problems with Great Lakes Power. They've done a terrific job in trying to find solutions to the problem.

I want to talk a little bit, though, about how bad the problem has been and how difficult it has been to resolve. I want to talk about what I and people like Doug Woods and Chris Wray and Dave Jennings and Earl and Shelly Dereski and Mark Leschishin and Nick from North of 17—all of those folks have been working with us to try to find solutions, to try to put the toothpaste back in the tube, so to speak. We didn't create the mess, but somehow or other we have to fix the mess.

Members like my friend from Thunder Bay-Superior North would share this view, that we've had a great deal of difficulty in the Ontario Hydro area also. The 4.3 cent



cap that my friend the energy critic, Mike Bryant, called for all of last fall has helped in the Hydro One area. But in the area of Great Lakes Power, the distribution and transmission costs have been incredible. Mr Speaker, you would know that the people in Wawa are probably paying more for transmission and distribution charges than you're paying per kilowatt hour in total. That is how expensive it is in this area.

We have worked very hard to see that that could be resolved. I want to talk about my constituents in Dubreuilville, who had to get formed a distribution company so that they would qualify for the 4.3 cent cap on energy rates. Those constituents, before and still, receive their electricity from the forest company. That meant there was no local distribution company, which meant they didn't qualify for the 4.3 cent cap.

People like Leo Raymond, the mayor, and Monique Ouellet, who is the clerk-treasurer of the township, have worked very hard with our office and with people in the minister's office and the ministry to see that the people in Dubreuilville have their energy costs capped at 4.3 cents.

As you know, Mr Speaker, I've worked with people from Laird township, Bruce Mines, St Joseph Island and Hawk Junction to get rural rate assistance for the good folks in the Great Lakes Power area. For some reason, they did not qualify for rural rate assistance. I have my bill, Bill 7, which we have been trying to get passed by unanimous consent in this Legislature for some time, and I would appreciate the support of all members in seeing that that happens in the near future.

We are heartened by the fact that Great Lakes Power has made some adjustments to their distribution and transmission costs to bring them more in line with Hydro, but I would say to the minister: we cannot rely on the goodwill of private companies. We need to have regulations that force Great Lakes Power to charge rates that are competitive with the rest of the province. We don't have that. We cannot rely on their goodwill. We have to have the proper regulations.

When we talk about this situation, people should know that Great Lakes Power has provided electricity in this area for decades, indeed generations. This is private power. This is not public power. What is needed is strong regulation to ensure that the people in this private power area receive the kind of electricity rates and service they received before the ill-fated reregulation/deregulation efforts of this government.

We need to work closely with these 11,500 customers to find a solution that will work for those folks.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** The time for debate has ended.

Mr Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1751 to 1802.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten):** All those in favour, please rise in your seats one at a time.

#### Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise in your seats one at a time.

#### Nays

Arnott, Ted	Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia
Baird, John R.	Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill
Barrett, Toby	Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bradley, James J.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Parsons, Ernie
Brown, Michael A.	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Smitherman, George
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Stockwell, Chris
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cordiano, Joseph	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Wettlaufer, Wayne
DeFaria, Carl	Mazzilli, Frank	Wilson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	McDonald, AL	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn	Wood, Bob
Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted	Young, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are nine; the nays are 70.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

It now being after six of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1805.*

## ERRATUM

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#### Should read:

through the NOHFC funding—in Kearney, in Britt, in

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of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
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Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
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(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 21 May 2003**

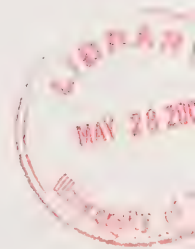
**Mercredi 21 mai 2003**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### ESTIMATES

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture):** Mr Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** The Honourable the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for services for the province for the year ending 31 March 2004 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** The Home and Community Care Round Table, made up of 22 different organizations, including the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the Ontario Community Support Association, the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens Organizations, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Health Coalition, the Retired Teachers of Ontario and the Victoria Order of Nurses, recently had a meeting with the Premier and his staff to plead with the government to live up to its solemn commitment made four years ago to increase home and community care funding by \$76 million in this year's estimates. This was not included in the throne speech and was not included in the budget fiasco.

Why? There are over 115,000 vulnerable seniors and persons with debilitating diseases who have lost services completely. The number of hours of service has declined by 30%. Over six million hours of homemaking, personal support, nursing and therapy services have been cut. What was the government's response? The government's response was to instruct community care access centres across this province to begin cutting service volumes by up to 37% immediately if they are to balance their budgets in the year 2003-04.

Premier and government, don't wait until the next election. Live up to the promises you made four years ago to those people in this province who need home care and community care services the most.

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** I rise today to speak of an important announcement made

recently in Scarborough by the Premier and the Minister of Public Safety and Security. But first I want to tell you about what my constituents have been telling me at the door as I have visited them throughout Scarborough Centre. They told me that they want their government to crack down on crime. Simply put, they want to feel safe in their homes, on their streets and in their neighbourhoods. I agree wholeheartedly with my constituents.

That's why I was so delighted that the Premier and the Minister of Public Safety and Security came to Scarborough on May 5 to announce that once again the government would be funding 1,000 new police officers. This follows the 1,000 additional police officers already hired since 1998. As the Premier put it, the "announcement will mean a more visible police presence in Ontario that will keep our communities safe, strong and vibrant."

I note that the 1,000 new police officers are but one part of the government's throne speech plan to increase public safety in our province, and particularly in my riding of Scarborough Centre. I therefore wish to express my sincere appreciation and that of my constituents to both the Premier and Minister Runciman for first listening and then acting upon the concerns of my constituents in Scarborough Centre.

#### JUVENILE DIABETES

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** Every day in Ontario there are citizens who suffer heart attacks—and suffer them needlessly, in some cases. There are citizens who experience kidney failure and have to have kidney dialysis or transplants. There are Ontarians who are experiencing vision loss, again in some cases needlessly, and citizens who are having to undergo amputation of their limbs.

I say "needlessly" because these people are victims of juvenile diabetes. It's very difficult to manage diabetes. There is no cure for it, but there's a wonderful device for managing juvenile diabetes called the insulin pump. It costs approximately \$5,000. From a humanitarian viewpoint, it makes sense. From a cost viewpoint, a heart attack costs the public health care system about \$100,000. If we think about the \$5,200 for an insulin pump and contrast that with the \$400 million this government has spent on ads, those ads would have bought 77,000 insulin pumps for victims of juvenile diabetes.

We have a two-tier system where some citizens are able to access insurance plans; others simply can't afford it and put their health or their children's health at risk. I call upon the Minister of Community, Family and

Children's Services to immediately add insulin pumps to the assistive devices program. They are literally a life-saving appliance that makes sense from a financial viewpoint and a humanitarian viewpoint. They need to be funded for Ontario's citizens now.

### RURAL SCHOOLS

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** It gives me great satisfaction to report to this Legislature that, after many months of debate and public meetings, the members of the Grand Erie District School Board listened to the good people of the Delhi area and voted unanimously to keep the doors to Delhi District Secondary School open. This is a great victory for all of us who fought for the survival of Delhi high school through meetings, petitions, briefs to the board and our Minister of Education. I thank the board for listening and making the right decision for the students in the Delhi area.

It's also a great victory for all of us throughout Ontario who have argued that rural schools are worth fighting for, that rural Ontario one-school communities need their schools to thrive and survive. Our government understands this. That's why we've allotted \$50 million and appointed Dr James Downey to develop a rural school strategy to address the unique challenges faced by boards with rural schools. However, the fight for our rural schools is far from over. We must continue to work together, much as all sides did quite recently in this Delhi debate.

I've been contacted by Dr Downey's office and I will be providing every assistance I can to provide insight on the rural school challenges we have faced in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. I encourage all who have been involved in school closure debates to relay their experience and input to Dr Downey.

### CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF EASTERN ONTARIO

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** This Harris-Eves government placed full-page partisan ads in three Ottawa daily newspapers last Saturday on the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. The information contained in the ads was absolutely nothing new. The people of eastern Ontario already know that CHEO has a built-in reputation as a centre of excellence. We already know that CHEO is a remarkable institution. We already know that until the SARS review is completed, the government is allowing CHEO to continue providing pediatric cardiac services.

The government knows full well that the people of eastern Ontario want to be reassured that their pediatric cardiac surgery is staying in Ottawa. Just before the last election the government told the people of London that their Children's Hospital of Western Ontario would keep all their specialized programs, but after the election, and despite the efforts of a human outcry, the government decided to centralize pediatric surgery in Toronto at Sick

Kids, shutting down the service in London and Ottawa. The people of eastern Ontario need to know that the pediatric cardiac unit is staying at CHEO in Ottawa, now and in the future—end of story.

The people in eastern Ontario are smart enough to see what these ads really are: partisan, promotional pieces that cost tens of thousands of dollars and should have been paid for by the Conservative Party of Ontario, not Ontario taxpayers. It is unethical, uncouth and despicable behaviour of this government at the expense of trusting Ontario citizens.

1340

### EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I'm happy to have a minute and a half to talk about what's happening with the Catholic teachers here in Toronto. We'll have another opportunity as soon as the Premier himself today will introduce a bill that will force teachers back to the schools. We're talking about a lockout, not a strike, that teachers are engaged in. We're talking about an issue where teachers want to get back to the classroom, were in the classroom, and the Toronto Catholic school board decided to take the extraordinary action of locking the teachers and the students out of their schools. The board decided to lock 69,000 students out of their schools when there was absolutely no reason to do so. What the teachers want is a settlement that's negotiated and bargained in good faith—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Please stop the clock. The member for Ottawa Centre, please come to order. You had your chance during the members' statements. It's now the member for Trinity-Spadina. This is going to be a very hectic day, I'm sure, and we don't need to start in members' statements right off the bat.

Sorry for the interruption, member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr Marchese:** What the teachers want is a negotiated settlement. That's what we want and that's what we hope they will be able to get: a fair and just settlement with their board. My argument is, their board is not treating these teachers in a fair and just way. By locking them out, they've done the unfair and unjust thing and have given this government the leeway and the power to have teachers be prey to their politics and their ideology. We think it's wrong.

We urge the board, Mr Carnevale and the other board members, to get back to the table and communicate to Eves today that this bill they're about to introduce is wrong. It's not needed. The teachers were teaching, the teachers want to teach, and the students should be back in the classroom.

### DAVE BABBITT

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex we are extremely fortunate to have many outstanding teachers who



diligently, consistently and unselfishly go above and beyond the call of duty. Today I want to share with the House one such teacher who has been singled out for recognition a couple of times in the past year.

Mr Dave Babbitt is the music teacher at Wallaceburg District Secondary School. Mr Babbitt was born and raised in Wallaceburg, graduated from the local high school and, after receiving his teaching degree, returned to his hometown to teach and share his love and passion for music with his students and his community.

In addition to his teaching duties, Mr Babbitt spends countless hours providing individual music instruction to students, directing school musicals, leading the school band, and producing an outstanding community production called "Hometown Christmas," which attracts audiences of more than 1,000. He also leads his own band called The Brass Factory, which lends its support to many community endeavours throughout the year.

This past year, Mr Babbitt was awarded the Bob Brooks award from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation for excellence in school-community relations. But of even greater significance was his selection for the Who's Who of American Teachers, which recognizes and publishes the name of the top 5% of teachers from all across North America. Mr Babbitt was nominated for this prestigious award by Ms Amanda Hale, a former student who earned the right to make the nomination based on her achievement as a member of the dean's list at her university. Tragically, Amanda was killed when the car she was driving was struck by a drunk driver just weeks after nominating Mr Babbitt for this award.

I know the House will want to join me in saluting Mr Dave Babbitt, just one of the many thousands of teachers across Ontario whose dedication and professionalism we should recognize and honour.

#### PREMIER'S RECORD

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** I have watched Ernie Eves very closely since he became Premier, and I am often reminded of that great Shaggy song, "It Wasn't Me." Just like Stockwell Day blaming his staff for not knowing which way Niagara Falls flows, every time Ernie hits a new stumbling block, he proclaims "It wasn't me," and points the finger in all different directions.

When he was caught handing out millions of dollars to pro sports teams, "It wasn't me." When he was ridiculed for having an infomercial budget presentation in an auto parts plant, he blamed the media; he blamed the Speaker. "It wasn't me," he shouted. When he was quoted in a press release calling Canadians cowards, he turned around and blamed his staff: "It wasn't me." When it was discovered that Ernie Eves authorized \$36 billion in government spending without the scrutiny of the Legislature, he blamed it on the bureaucrats: "It wasn't me." When hydro prices skyrocketed because of his complete mismanagement, Ernie Eves blamed Mike Harris: "It wasn't me."

This is a Premier who has lost his way. The wheels are spinning but the go-kart isn't moving. Ernie's blame-game approach is tired and old. It's typical of a government that's out of steam and out of ideas. They're out for themselves and their friends.

There is only one leader and only one party that will fix our public services, fix our schools and our hospitals, clean up our drinking water and give us air that we can breathe. That's Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party.

#### SARS

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** I rise today to congratulate Premier Eves, Minister Clement, Doctors Colin D'Cunha and Jim Young, and all doctors, nurses and health employees and our entire medical community on a well-fought battle against SARS.

I want to recognize Dr Susan Tamblyn, medical officer of health for the Perth district health unit, who worked at the SARS provincial operations centre sharing her expertise in epidemics and pandemics. Her days were long and stressful, and I want her to know that we appreciate her hard work.

I also want to recognize the entire staff of Listowel Memorial Hospital, who dealt with a suspected case of SARS with great professionalism and care.

Now that we've defeated SARS, we have turned our attention to the economic fallout from the disease. I hope all Ontarians will take advantage of the tax holiday on accommodations and admissions and rediscover our great province. Next Monday is the Stratford Festival's opening night for its 51st season, and I want to remind everyone to include a trip to Stratford in their summer plans.

Having defeated SARS, we are being confronted by another disease with the potential for equally devastating economic repercussions. With a single case of mad cow disease in Alberta, the United States and other countries have closed their borders to Canadian beef and cattle. Last night I spoke to many farmers in my riding who are very worried. I know our testing system works. It identified the one isolated animal, but we need to make sure other countries know that too. We need to put the same effort into proving that our beef is safe that we put into proving that it is safe to visit Toronto.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report dated May 21, 2003, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to restrict the conveyance of passengers for compensation / *Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour restreindre le transport de passagers moyennant rémunération.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### BACK TO SCHOOL (TORONTO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY) AND EDUCATION AND PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS NEGOTIATIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

### LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT LE RETOUR À L'ÉCOLE (SECTEUR ÉLÉMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL CATHOLIQUE DE TORONTO) ET MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION ET LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES ÉCOLES PROVINCIALES

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act / *Projet de loi 28, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Toronto Catholic District School Board et modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les écoles provinciales.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Eves, Ernie	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	

**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 52; the nays are 42.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

### PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO THE FACTS ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ACCÈS DU PUBLIC AUX FAITS

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to amend the Public Inquiries Act / *Projet de loi 29, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes publiques.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.



The member for a short statement?

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** The title of this bill is the People's Access to the Facts Act. It amends the Public Inquiries Act to allow any member of the Legislative Assembly to propose a resolution to set up an inquiry into any matter that the act allows. The Assembly is required to vote on the resolution within 60 sessional days after it is proposed.

This in effect gives the Legislature itself the same power to call inquiries as the cabinet now has. Surely this power should rest in the hands of all the elected representatives of the people. Democracy and transparency do work.

This bill is similar to one which I introduced earlier in this session of the Legislature, except that it requires two thirds of the MPPs to support introduction of an inquiry resolution.

1400

## ADULT PROTECTION ACT, 2003

### LOI DE 2003

#### SUR LA PROTECTION DES ADULTES

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to protect adults from abuse and neglect / Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à protéger les adultes contre la maltraitance et la négligence.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** I'll make it brief. The bill provides for the appointment of the director of the adult protection office to provide protection for abused and neglected adults who are unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect due to physical or mental disability.

"Abuse" means one or more of the following: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, medication abuse, financial abuse or abuse of one's rights and freedoms.

"Neglect" means that person is not receiving proper care and attention in the premises where he or she resides, is incapable of caring properly for himself or herself by reason of physical or mental disability, and refuses, delays or is unable to make provision for his or her proper care and attention.

## DEMOCRATIC HERITAGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVATION ACT, 2003

### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PRÉSERVATION ARCHÉOLOGIQUE DU PATRIMOINE DÉMOCRATIQUE

Mr Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to ensure the preservation of the site of Toronto's first parliament buildings / Projet de loi 31, Loi

visant à assurer la préservation du site des premiers édifices parlementaires de Toronto.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** The bill is intended to ensure the preservation of the site of Toronto's first Parliament buildings, built in 1798 and 1820.

Section 2 provides that the site be deemed to have been designated under part VI of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Section 3 provides that the minister responsible for the administration of that act shall ensure that a full archaeological excavation and investigation is conducted and shall promote the purchase of the site, including the relocation of the businesses and its donation to the city of Toronto, the construction of a museum and the provision of operating funds for the museum.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Just before we recognize the member for Mississauga South, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the interns from the National Assembly of Quebec. Please join me in welcoming our special guests.

I shouldn't do this, but I will; they're joined by Mr Tom Wills from London, England, who is a goaltending buddy of mine.

We welcome all our honoured guests.

## ONTARIO WATER RESOURCES AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RESSOURCES EN EAU DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Marland moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act / Projet de loi 32, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** This bill provides that no one may sell in Ontario for human consumption water or ice in a sealed container or package or from a dispenser other than a water dispenser that is connected to a water distribution system of a municipality unless the water or ice meets the minimum standards prescribed in the regulation made under the act. The regulations can also regulate dispensers of water or ice for human consumption.

## GAS PRICE WATCHDOG ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'AGENT  
DE SURVEILLANCE DES PRIX  
DU CARBURANT

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act respecting the price of motor vehicle fuel and the appointment of a Gas Price Watchdog / Projet de loi 33, Loi concernant le prix du carburant pour véhicules automobiles et la nomination d'un agent de surveillance des prix du carburant.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** This legislation would establish the office of the gas price watchdog, which would have the power to monitor pricing practices in the province with respect to motor vehicle fuel and the power also to conduct inquiries into pricing practices on the order of the minister.

While the gas price watchdog would be responsible for the monitoring of pricing across the province, I feel it will have particular relevance in northwestern Ontario, where the price fluctuations have frequently been much more volatile than in other parts of the province. In Thunder Bay last weekend, the price of gas shot up 10 cents a litre just before the long weekend, with no justification whatsoever. Consumers are fed up with this practice, and it is precisely for that reason that we need meaningful legislation such as this.

I want to pay particular thanks to my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence, Mike Colle, who brought forth this legislation previously and who has been very supportive in helping me bring it forward once again.

REPRESENTATION AMENDMENT ACT  
(WATERLOO-WELLINGTON-  
KITCHENER), 2003LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE  
(WATERLOO-WELLINGTON-KITCHENER)

Mr Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 34, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** As you're aware, Mr Speaker, at present the names of provincial electoral districts are identical to those of the federal electoral districts. This bill makes an exception to that rule by changing the name of the present provincial electoral district of Waterloo-Wellington, my constituency, to Waterloo-Wellington-Kitchener.

I introduced a bill similar to this in the previous session, and of course all the private members' bills died

on the order paper when the House was prorogued. I would ask all members to consider supporting my bill.

ONTARIO WATER RESOURCES  
AMENDMENT ACT  
(WATER SOURCE PROTECTION), 2003LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES RESSOURCES EN EAU  
DE L'ONTARIO  
(PROTECTION DES SOURCES  
D'ALIMENTATION EN EAU)

Mrs Dombrowsky moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection / Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne la protection des sources d'alimentation en eau.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** The bill amends the Ontario Water Resources Act with regard to the availability and conservation of Ontario water resources. Specifically, the bill requires the director to consider the Ministry of the Environment's statement of environmental values when making any decision under the act.

The bill also requires that municipalities and conservation authorities are notified of an application to take water that, if granted, may affect their water sources or supplies.

1410

ONTARIO DRINKING WATER  
SOURCE PROTECTION ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION  
DES SOURCES D'EAU POTABLE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to protect sources of drinking water in Ontario / Projet de loi 36, Loi visant à protéger les sources d'eau potable en Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a statement?

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** As members in the House are aware, we are marking the third anniversary of the tainted water tragedy in Walkerton. To help prevent such a tragedy, this bill offers protection of the sources of drinking water, because the protection of sources of drinking water is integral to the multi-barrier approach recommended in the Report of the Walkerton Inquiry. This bill sets out a framework for



comprehensive watershed-based drinking water protection, as recommended by Justice O'Connor.

MUNICIPALITY OF  
CHATHAM-KENT ACT, 2003

Mr Beaubien moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill Pr12, An Act respecting the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** The restructuring order that created the municipality of Chatham-Kent specified that certain bylaws and resolutions of the former municipalities and/or local boards ceased to be in force on December 31, 2002. This bill changes this date to December 31, 2004. The bill is made retroactive to December 31, 2002.

ONTARIO WORKERS'  
MEMORIAL ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003  
SUR LE MONUMENT COMMÉMORATIF  
DES TRAVAILLEURS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to establish the Ontario Workers' Memorial / Projet de loi 37, Loi visant à ériger le monument commémoratif en hommage aux travailleurs de l'Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** The purpose of this bill is to require that a memorial be established adjacent to the legislative precinct of the Legislative Assembly to honour the memory of those workers who have died on the job. Appropriately, this Legislature has chosen a memorial to honour firefighters and police officers who have died on the job. This would extend it to all workers, and it would be at least a small tribute to the families of and to those hundreds of Ontarians who die on the job every year, who get up and don't come home from work that day. This would be, I think, a fitting tribute to those men and women.

TYNDALE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
& SEMINARY ACT, 2003

Mr Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr21, An Act respecting Tyndale College & Seminary (formerly Ontario Bible College and Ontario Theological Seminary).

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to private members' rules, that is ordered for third reading.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE  
ET À LA FAMILLE

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to Allow one Children's Aid Society access to information held by another Children's Aid Society / Projet de loi 38, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille afin de permettre à une société d'aide à l'enfance d'avoir accès aux renseignements détenus par une autre société d'aide à l'enfance.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This bill will amend the Child and Family Services Act to allow a society to have access to information held by another society, unless the information is protected by solicitor-client privilege, the information may not be disclosed under the Youth Criminal Justice Act or under section 35 of the Mental Health Act, or this information is subject to an order of the courts.

NO HOG FACTORIES ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 INTERDISANT  
LES PORCHERIES INDUSTRIELLES

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to restrict the operation of large hog farms and to amend the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 39, Loi visant à restreindre l'exploitation des grosses fermes porcines et à modifier la Loi de 2002 sur la gestion des éléments nutritifs.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Again, on the eve of the third anniversary of the tainted water tragedy in Walkerton, I'm introducing this bill to help protect water in this province. The bill prohibits large hog farms, subject to the ability of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make exemptions where it is appropriate to do so.

The bill also amends the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, to provide that a regulation under the act only supersedes a municipal bylaw if the regulation provides greater environmental protection. The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations exempting any person from complying with section 2 if the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that Ontario legislation is in force that protects sources of drinking water from contamination that may be caused by the factory hog farm. It relates to my bill I introduced earlier on source protection.

# MOTOR VEHICLE MANUFACTURER'S WARRANTY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003

## SUR LA GARANTIE DES FABRICANTS DE VÉHICULES AUTOMOBILES

Mr Sampson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act respecting warranties offered by manufacturers of motor vehicles / Projet de loi 40, Loi concernant les garanties offertes par les fabricants de véhicules automobiles.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short statement from the member?

**Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre):** This is a bill identical to the one I tabled in the third session of the 37th Parliament concerning remedies that would be available to consumers who enter into a purchase agreement for a vehicle and find out that major defects haven't been repaired at three attempts. It gives the purchaser the remedy to be able to say to the manufacturer, "Give me a new car or give me my money back."

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry to inform the members—I didn't realize the time was going on—that under standing order 33(f), the period for introduction of bills shall be limited to 30 minutes. Unfortunately, we're over the 30 minutes. Tomorrow, we will get to the members who were up today first. I apologize for that.

## MOTIONS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion, without notice, regarding private members' public business.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 7, 8, 9 and 10 be waived.

**The Speaker:** Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion, without notice, regarding private members' public business.

**The Speaker:** Unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Guzzo and Mr Beaubien exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Guzzo assumes ballot item 10 and Mr Beaubien assumes ballot item 7—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** As controversial as it is, I will continue—and that Mr Beaubien and Mr Wood exchange

places in order of precedence such that Mr Beaubien assumes ballot item 15 and Mr Wood assumes ballot item 7.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** In the spirit of collegiality, I say to you, Mr Speaker, I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i)—reminding of the collegiality that's taking place—the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Wednesday, May 21, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1423 to 1428.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of Mr Stockwell's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Eves, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Boyer, Claudette	Guzzo, Garry J.	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Hastings, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Ruprecht, Tony
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert	Sergio, Mario
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Smitherman, George
Coburn, Brian	Kennedy, Gerard	Spina, Joseph
Colle, Mike	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Stewart, R. Gary
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Levac, David	Tascona, Joseph N.
Curling, Alvin	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Dombrowsky, Leona	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	McMeekin, Ted	Wood, Bob
Ecker, Janet	Miller, Norm	Young, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	

**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

### Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley	
Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony	



**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 83; the nays are 7.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Today I have introduced the Back to School (Toronto Catholic Elementary) and Education and Provincial Schools Negotiations Amendment Act. This act represents the decisive action our government is prepared to take to ensure students in the Toronto Catholic elementary system are able to complete their studies. They will be able to do this without further threat of school year disruptions because of lockouts or so-called work-to-rule campaigns.

Some 69,000 students are out of their classrooms. Instead of being in class and learning, they and their parents are helpless pawns in a struggle between the teachers' union and the school board. We all know that a day of lost instruction is a lost opportunity for success.

We have heard from parents, we have heard from students and we have heard from teachers. They are disgusted with the current situation. Parents want to know their children are getting the best education available, and they want to see report cards and results. They want to be assured that if their children need extra help in a subject, they will get it. They want to see their hard-earned taxes pay for education, not a power struggle. Most importantly, they see their children's futures at risk.

The legislation introduced today would, if passed, end this disruption. It would protect students and their opportunity to learn and succeed.

This government has already invested almost \$700 million to provide 3% increases to teachers' salary benchmarks this school year and a further 3% for next year. Clearly the problem cannot be solved just by money. This problem needs strong and decisive action. We are doing our part. Now we expect the boards and the teachers to do their part.

Our government takes the education of our children seriously. We know that most teachers are dedicated professionals who want to be in their classrooms teaching. They do not want to be on strike or take actions they know are detrimental to the education and safety of their students. We also know that there are activists who want nothing more than to disrupt the system for their own reasons.

The time for classroom disruption is over. Our goal is to ensure that students receive the education they deserve without the threat of school-year disruption because of strikes, lockouts or work-to-rule campaigns.

Our children's education is a top priority for Ontarians and for our government. That is why we have continued

to invest in education. This next school year we will be investing \$15.3 billion, which will increase to \$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year. We have also introduced Ontario students to a new and more rigorous curriculum and province-wide standardized tests to better prepare them to compete in today's global economy. It simply doesn't make sense to allow these strides forward to be jeopardized by labour disputes.

I am asking for the Legislature's approval for our actions. I am asking for the Legislature to consider the needs and the future of the children first.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Could we stop the clock for a quick moment, please? Before we continue, we have a former member in the members' gallery east. Speaking with the member for Kingston and the Islands is a former member for Kingston and the Islands, Mr Ken Keyes, a member of the 33rd and 34th Parliaments. Please join me in welcoming our colleague.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education):** Over the past several years, our government has made a number of changes to Ontario's education system. In making those changes, we have been guided by one goal. That goal is very simple: to ensure that all the young people—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Minister, sorry to interrupt. Stop the clock. Order.

Members will know that we fight very hard to have ministerial statements done in the House, and then when they do it, you yell and scream across at them. You're going to have five minutes. If you expect the ministers to make statements in here, then I suspect you'd probably want to give them a little bit of courtesy to do it; otherwise, quite frankly, they'll do it outside. I've been one of the ones fighting to do it in here and forcing them to do it in here, and then you can't even hear the minister. I would appreciate your co-operation.

The Deputy Premier and Minister of Education.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Our goal is to ensure that all the young people in Ontario receive the best education possible, an education that enables them to learn, experience new opportunities and reach their full potential. We want to ensure that every student achieves personal success.

Parents, educators and students have told us that they want a government that is committed to listening and responding decisively to their concerns; they want a government that is willing to take the necessary steps to ensure that students have the tools and the resources they need to achieve success in life.

We have spent the past year listening to parents and educational stakeholders and seeking their advice on how best to move forward to provide the best opportunities for our students.

Last April, in response to concerns about textbooks, the first action we took under Premier Eves was to announce an additional \$65 million in new funding for textbooks.

In response to concerns about the funding formula, we appointed Dr Mordechai Rozanski to review our funding

for schools and make recommendations on how we should move forward. Dr Rozanski's report confirmed that per pupil funding is providing equality to all students in this province no matter where they live. He also provided us with immediate and long-term recommendations.

I'm very pleased to say that our government responded immediately, after the release of the report, with additional funding for special education, salaries and transportation, as had been recommended. The recent budget committed almost \$2 billion in new funding over the next three years to move forward on the rest of his recommendations.

We have made good on our commitment to make the children of this province and education a priority. That's why we set up the task force on students at risk. Recently, in response to their recommendations, we have introduced the GOALS strategy to benefit students in grades 7 to 12 who need extra help in reading, writing and math and in their transition from school to the workplace. That's the reason we are investing approximately \$250 million annually in new special education funding to better support our students with special needs.

1440

Unfortunately, our work is not yet complete. Recently, parents have been telling us that they want further stability in Ontario's education system. They want a system that ensures that labour negotiations do not disrupt the quality of the education of their students. They want stability in the classroom, and so do we. They want students learning the new curriculum in a stable learning environment. They want regular reports on how their students are doing.

Today we are again acting on behalf of our students. We, today, with this legislation, are putting our students first. Students cannot learn and teachers who want to teach cannot teach if they are not in the classroom. That's the reason this legislation is being introduced today, to ensure that the education of the children in the Toronto Catholic District School Board is not further disrupted by a labour dispute that keeps teachers away from their students. I have been encouraging both sides to negotiate.

It's because we want our teachers in the classroom that we have increased funding for salary benchmarks by a total of \$680 million. That amounts to an increase of 3% to the benchmark this school year and another 3% next year. We did this to provide stability.

This funding was provided to boards to ensure that they could negotiate fair and reasonable agreements with their teachers. More importantly, it was provided to ensure that the learning environments of Ontario students are not disrupted by labour disputes. Labour negotiations belong in a boardroom. They belong in a boardroom with senior administrators and union representatives, not on the picket lines or in Ontario's classrooms, and not at the expense of the educational experience of our students.

I believe, and our government believes, that the most important factors contributing to a child's education are excellent, outstanding teachers, such as those we have in

this province, working in a stable learning environment. Ontario today has some of the hardest working, most highly skilled and dedicated teachers in the world. We have made the maintaining and updating of their skills essential to the success of our students.

On the occasion of World Teachers' Day last fall, I told this Legislature that we ask a lot of our teachers; in fact, we ask more of them than we have ever asked. We ask teachers to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need for success in today's competitive global economy. We ask teachers to help our children develop the self-esteem and confidence they need to live productive and fulfilling lives as active and responsible citizens. We ask teachers to inspire in our young people a love of learning that will last a lifetime, because in today's changing world, the need for education never ends. We ask our teachers to be educational leaders, to work closely with their colleagues, parents, other professionals and members of the community to improve student learning. They are doing all this and more.

In order to do what is asked, teachers now need our support. In response, we have implemented a comprehensive program to ensure teaching excellence, because it's important that teachers have the most up-to-date skills and knowledge when they stand at the head of their class. Parents require it, and the success of our students demands it.

Because of that, we're expanding our faculties of education in Ontario. From 1999 to 2003, 6,000 new spaces for teaching students were created, a 24% increase over the previous five years. We're also working with teachers to attract young people into the teaching profession. The recent Be the Spark campaign was a joint effort of the government, the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the Ontario College of Teachers, the Council of Directors of Education and the Ontario Association of Deans of Education. The campaign demonstrated what I personally know: teaching is a great profession. It allows an opportunity to make a tremendous difference in the lives of young people.

When they do enter the profession, teachers have access to a range of supports to keep their skills up to date. To facilitate professional learning, our government recently committed \$5 million for distance learning, on-line courses and other courses. We want to be sure that a sufficient number of low-cost, easily accessible professional learning courses are available to teachers across the province.

Teachers are taking advantage of these learning opportunities. Thousands of Ontario teachers have voluntarily taken summer courses to help them teach the new curriculum.

We're also providing resources that help teachers do their jobs on a daily basis. As we've implemented the new curriculum, we have provided teachers with real examples of completed tasks and assignments at different grade and ability levels so that they are better able to consistently assess their students' work.

As we move forward with our GOALS strategy to ensure the success of our students in secondary school,



expert panels are working to give school boards, principals and teachers advice on the most effective strategies and resources to help students achieve success at reading, writing, math and the transition we now have in place from school to the workplace, college or university.

Our new supports and the hard work of our teachers and students are paying dividends. Our test scores show that our teachers are helping our students be more and more successful. In provincial, national and international tests, our students are doing better. They're showing that they can perform as well as or better than students anywhere in the world in reading, writing, math and science. We cannot afford to let labour disruptions take away from the significant gains we have made in the last seven years.

If this legislation passes, teachers at the Toronto Catholic District School Board will not only be in the classroom, they will be there with the tools and the support they need to ensure that our students are able to achieve success in a safe and stable learning environment.

I would encourage all members of this House today to put our students first.

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** The act we've introduced today represents the decisive action our government is prepared to take to ensure that students are able to complete their studies without the threat of school-year disruptions because of strikes, lockouts or so-called work-to-rule campaigns.

As members are aware, the Toronto Catholic District School Board has locked out its elementary school teachers due to the inability of both parties to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. Some 69,000 students are out of school, and this isn't the first time. Over the years, we've seen labour skirmishes occur in one board or another. Parents, teachers and students have told us over and over again that strikes, lockouts and work-to-rule campaigns disrupt our children's education and can often create unnecessary anxiety and stress for them and their families.

If passed, this bill would end the lockout by the Toronto Catholic District School Board. It would get the 69,000 students back in the classroom, where they belong. At the same time, steps are being taken to protect those students and to put a halt to the harmful work-to-rule actions by the teachers.

Work-to-rule campaigns are destructive in many ways. For instance, work-to-rule hampers instruction time. Before the lockout at the Toronto Catholic District School Board, teachers were arriving 15 minutes before class and leaving 15 minutes after the end of class.

Work-to-rule keeps parents and students in the dark. Teachers were not providing comments on report cards. As a result, parents have no idea how their children are doing in school or what help they need.

1450

Work-to-rule hurts a well-rounded education. Teachers were withdrawing from school trips, including a year-end traditional trip to Quebec City, which pres-

ented an emotional and financial cost to the students. The teachers were refusing to administer the standardized test. These tests are a part of our government's commitment to better prepare our children to compete in today's global economy.

We've heard from parents, we've heard from students, we've heard from teachers: they are all disgusted with the actions that both the board and the union are taking. Parents want to know their children are getting the best education available. They want to see the report cards and test results. They want to be assured that if their children need extra help in a subject, they will get it. Parents want to be able to discuss their child's education with teachers and not be told that such meetings are not a part of the teacher's job. They want to see their hard-earned taxes pay for education, not for ongoing fights between boards and unions. Most important, they see their children's futures at risk.

The legislation today would, if passed, end this practice of using students and their parents as bargaining chips in contract negotiations. It would protect students and safeguard their opportunity to learn and succeed. If passed by the Legislature and proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor, this bill would provide a fair and balanced approach to the situation at the Toronto District Catholic School Board. It would get students back in their classrooms by ordering the board to resume normal operations immediately after the act comes into force. It would allow the school board and the union to continue to negotiate toward a fair settlement by giving the parties seven days in which to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. If the school board and the union were unable to resolve their differences, they have the opportunity to mutually agree upon mediator or arbitrator. If they are unable to agree, the Minister of Labour would appoint one. Until a new agreement is reached, the terms and conditions of employment would remain those that were in effect immediately prior to the parties being in a legal strike position.

This bill would also provide for maximum penalties of \$2,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for the union if they're not in compliance. Each day of non-compliance would be a separate offence.

We want the students back in the school.

**The Speaker:** I know the minister wasn't finished but the time was up. Responses?

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** What we have just witnessed has to be one of the most shallow, cynical displays of political gamesmanship that has ever, ever been witnessed in this Legislature. The Premier and the other ministers who have just spoken would have us believe that somehow this has everything to do with ensuring that the 69,000 students who are found today outside the classroom are returned to the classroom. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with political gamesmanship and the next election. If this government, but more importantly, if this Premier, were genuinely interested in ensuring that those kids were back in their classrooms, the first thing that he



would have done, in anticipation of this lockout—because pretty well everybody knew that this was around the corner; everybody knew this was going to happen. The first thing the Premier should have done was pick up the phone and talk to the teachers' representatives and the school board representatives and ask what he might do to facilitate a resolution.

That kind of an exercise doesn't cost a cent and is in keeping with the true responsibilities that are attached to the Office of the Premier of Ontario. This guy doesn't understand that. Then when the lockout had taken place, the Premier would have done the same thing. He would have invited both sides into his office and said, "What is it that we can do by working together to facilitate a resolution and get the kids back in the classroom?" What this Premier decided to do instead, very deliberately, was to take a seat on the side, fold his arms, smile, grin from ear to ear, watch this unfold and hope that somehow he could make this work into his plan for electioneering in Ontario.

If this Premier were genuinely interested in getting these kids back to school, then he would have introduced a bill today that would have done nothing more and nothing less than that. What he has done—

*Interjection.*

**Mr McGuinty:** You don't know what they've roped you into. You'd better pay attention to what I'm about to say here.

What they have done—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Member, take your seat. Stop the clock. Order. Members come to order. The other side was very quiet for the Minister of Education.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** They were so. I will say this very clearly: we've got a very important vote coming up, and I will throw people out before the vote if they misbehave. If everybody wants to stay for that vote—and I'm sure the whips want them here—they'd better be good or I will throw them out.

I beg to differ with a few of the members. They were good for the minister when she spoke. I listened very quietly. They started off, and then they were quiet for her. I'm expecting the same from the leader of the official opposition.

Sorry for the interruption, leader of the official opposition.

**Mr McGuinty:** We had indicated our intentions to the government to support legislation. Let me say at the outset that we would have preferred that the parties be given at least 24 more hours to resolve the differences. But failing that, we indicated we were prepared to support a bill which would have the effect of doing nothing more than returning the kids to the classroom, bringing an end to the lockout and putting in place an arbitration process. We thought both parties would reconcile themselves to that over the course of time.

What the government has decided to do here with this back-to-work bill is amend provincial education policy.

What they are doing here is saying that the definition of a strike is now going to include work to rule. What they're going to do is to make voluntary extracurricular activities mandatory. Coaching the basketball team is now going to become mandatory. Coaching hockey, soccer, baseball and anything else is going to become mandatory. If you're going to act as a drama coach in the evening to help out your students, that's going to become mandatory. If you're going to help students with the yearbook, that too is going to become mandatory.

I want to quote you something the Premier himself said not that long ago to the *Pembroke Daily Observer*, on March 6 just last year. He said, "I think it's time to bury the hatchet and talk to teachers to see what they want in their education system. You can legislate anything you want, but you can't legislate goodwill and legislate respect. You have to earn that." The Premier could not have been more right.

I want to state this again so it is clear and emphatic. This has nothing to do with returning Toronto kids to their classroom. It has everything to do with political opportunism and preparing themselves to go into the next election. If they want to get the kids back to school, then introduce in this Legislature today a clean bill. We would be delighted to support that.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** First of all, I want to respond to the Premier. The Premier spoke today in terms of wanting to "restore stability," I believe were the words he used, and that he wants to present himself as the white knight here who is somehow going to bring peace to our schools.

I just want to remind people that it wasn't so long ago that someone said, "We need to create a crisis in education in Ontario." For people who haven't been around for a while, they might not know who that was, but in fact it was the first Conservative education minister who said, "The government needs to create a crisis in education." I say, for the majority of parents, students, teachers and school trustees across the province, this government has certainly succeeded in that. You have succeeded in making our children's education an ongoing political football. If your television ads aren't attacking teachers, then you're out there attacking trustees or you're out there on many occasions trying to insinuate that somehow our children are not doing as well as they should.

The reality was disclosed by Dr Rozanski, who conducted your own task force report on education. He said, after going from one end of the province to the other, the real problem is that, after your decision to create a crisis, after your decision to cut funding from school boards and cut funding from schools, our schools in this province are under-funded to the tune of \$2 billion a year. Now you say, on the eve of an election, that you can be trusted to put the money back in. On the eve of an election, you want to present yourselves as somehow recreating or fixing the mess that you, in fact, are responsible for.

That's exactly the character of this legislation today. This is a government, this is a Minister of Education,



who could have phoned up the chair of the Toronto District Catholic School Board and said, "Please withdraw the lockout. Please get back to the bargaining table. Find a settlement."

Did the minister do that? Not at all. Because the minister, the Premier and the Minister of Labour are more interested in making our children's education into a political football. You're more interested in using it as a launching pad for your election campaign. I say to you, the people of Ontario are on to you. They have watched these tactics from you for eight years now and they're not going to fall for them, this time. They're not going to allow you to continue to use our children's education as a political football that you can kick around whenever it suits you, whenever you think you can get a little bit of political advantage from it.

Shame on you. Shame on using those children, those teachers for nothing more than your cynical ploy to try to get some kind of leg up in advance of an announcement of an election campaign.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** It amazes me that it requires three ministers to deliver a simple message that says teachers are going to have to get back into the classrooms—three ministers, and one of them is the Premier. I've never seen that before; it's unprecedented.

I want to say to this House that this back-to-work legislation is not about students; it's about an election. We know it's pure, political, pitiful, craven, desperate opportunism by this government which needs to get re-elected, and they need to engage in class warfare in order to maintain a third term. This is what this is about. It's class warfare and this warfare is against the teachers.

You're not going to get away with it. It's quite clear. I feel it; I know you're not going to get away with it. What the parents want are more librarians, more textbooks, more principals in each and every school, more ESL support, more music teachers, more art teachers. That's what they want. They don't want an interventionist and more centralist government like yours disrupting our educational system. That's what you've done. The real disrupters are not the teachers. The one who has disrupted the system is you. You have done it for seven or eight years, and you continue to do it. You are the problem, not them.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** We now have a deferred vote on the motion by Mr Conway arising from the Speaker's ruling of May 8, 2003. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1503 to 1508.*

**The Speaker:** Mr Conway has moved that this House declares that it is the undoubted right of the Legislative

Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Sorbara, Greg

**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

### Nays

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tumbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Eves, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 42; the nays are 53.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

## VISITORS

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that members of the Legislative Assembly would like to welcome to the assembly today in the gallery behind me students, teachers and parents from Prince Philip Public School in St Catharines.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, just a short while

ago, your government introduced in the House a bill that you claim would have the effect solely of returning some 69,000 Toronto schoolchildren to their classroom as soon as that bill received third reading and became law. But the truth of the matter, as you well know, is that this bill has much more to it than that. Part II of the bill provides for some amendments to the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act.

You know, Premier, that had you introduced a bill that was clean and did nothing more than what you claimed it would do, you would have our support. But instead, what you have chosen to do is to include an amendment to provincial education policy. I think it would be more appropriate, it would be fair and it would be responsible for you—if you want to make that kind of change, then you have a responsibility to get a mandate from the people of Ontario through an election.

I'll repeat the offer I made in my response to your statement, Premier: if you yank part II from this bill, you will receive our support to get the kids back in their classrooms. Will you do that, Premier?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** We have introduced a piece of legislation that will return students in this board to the classroom, where they should be. There is nothing in this bill that prevents the board and the teachers' union from continuing to negotiate. They can be negotiating today. As a matter of fact, we have said repeatedly that a negotiated settlement is still by far the preferred option of everybody, I believe, with respect to this dispute or any other dispute.

With respect to his comment about part II, there is nothing in part II with respect to changing the regulations under the Education Act that teachers should not be performing in the classroom on a day-to-day basis.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, if part II is of no real significance, then why did you include it in a simple back-to-work bill? The fact of the matter is that what you're trying to do is to include in your back-to-work bill a fundamental change to provincial education policy. We feel that if that's what you want to do, then you have a responsibility to get a mandate from the people of Ontario through an election. If you were sincerely committed to doing nothing more than getting those 69,000 kids back into the classroom, then I ask you again on their behalf, why not strip from your bill part II, so that we have nothing more in the bill than what you purport it claims to do?

**Hon Mr Eves:** What the leader of the official opposition is complaining about is that teachers in the province who are not in a legal strike position and the teachers in this particular board are going to "fully and completely fill out report cards with comments and grades." Does he object to that? "Co-operate and assist in the administration of tests under the Education Quality and Accountability Act." Does he disagree with that? "Participate in regular meetings with the students' parents." Does he disagree with that? "Performing duties as assigned by the principal in relation to co-operative placement of their

students." Surely he can't disagree with that. "Performing duties traditionally associated with the graduation of students." He can't disagree with that.

Those are the only things that are different. They surely fall within the definition of everyday work of any teacher in the province of Ontario, and surely the leader of the official opposition isn't objecting that we are asking teachers to perform this work.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, I'm not sure that you even know what is found inside your bill. Part II provides that a strike is going to include "programs involving co-instructional activities." If you look up "co-instructional activities," the definition says they're activities "not limited to activities having to do with school-related sports, arts and cultural activities ... letters of support for pupils" and other things. Premier, this does much more than what you are describing. You are talking, in what should be a simple back-to-work bill, about a fundamental change to provincial education policy. You're going to make extracurricular activities, co-instructional activities, which includes voluntary activities—which is what we're really talking about here. You're going to make those mandatory.

Premier, you yourself said not that long ago, "I think that it's time to bury the hatchet and to talk to teachers to see what they want in their education system. You can legislate anything you want, but you can't legislate goodwill and respect. You have to earn that."

Do you honestly think that with this so-called back-to-work bill today you're going to earn the respect of teachers Ontario-wide? Is that what you honestly think? If you're going to make that kind of fundamental change, do you not think you have a responsibility to call an election and let the people of Ontario pass judgment?

**Hon Mr Eves:** We are here today to take care of these 69,000 students and make sure they get back to the classroom. The leader of the official opposition and his colleagues will have an opportunity, time enough, to discuss issues such as this before the people of the province of Ontario. He won't have to worry about having that opportunity. But the first and foremost thing is to get these 69,000 students back into the classroom, where they should be, receiving the instruction that we know the overwhelming majority of professional teachers want to provide to their students.

What we see here in the House today is a great demonstration of a leader of the official opposition trying to twist the logic so he can justify not putting these students back in the classroom, where they belong. Are you in favour of the students or the teacher's union?

1520

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** New question?

**Mr McGuinty:** I'm very interested: you maintain, Premier, that you're committed to putting students first and that you have nothing more that you want to do except to get the kids back in the classroom.

I want to know what specifically you did to intervene in this matter and to help bring both sides together so that they might work this out among themselves and, I would



gather, in a much speedier way than we're now going to have in terms of dealing with this legislation here. Because I want to tell you what I did, Premier. I got hold of representatives on behalf of teachers, I got hold of a representative at the school board, and I asked them if there was anything at all that I could do to facilitate a resolution.

*Interjections.*

**Mr McGuinty:** The other side might not think that is a worthwhile undertaking. You might think that, in these kinds of things, what you should do is simply sit back and do nothing. But we over here feel a sense of responsibility to try to bring the sides together and get the kids back in the classroom. So what I want to know from you, Premier, is what exactly have you done, apart from sitting on your hands and crafting this bill, which has provincial implications? What specifically did you do to reach out to both sides and bring this matter to a resolution?

**Hon Mr Eves:** We, my office, contacted both the head of the union and the head of the board of education and asked them to continue negotiating, because that is where this problem is going to be resolved: at the negotiating table.

I might say—all these little fingers pointing over there, Mr Speaker—that we did it without offending the integrity of either individual involved, which is more than I can say for you.

**Mr McGuinty:** So I gather, Premier, that you yourself did nothing. Personally, you stayed a hundred miles away from this. Because this plays into your agenda.

Let's be honest about what's happening here. You are absolutely delighted with this turn of events. The fact that you introduced this bill at this time is a lot more than pure coincidence. You are delighted with this turn of events. What you intend to do is to come across as some kind of a strong-arm in Ontario, and when it comes to the interests of children, you will do nothing more and nothing less than advance your own political interests. That's what this is all about.

What happened to the Ernie Eves who said, "You can't legislate goodwill and respect. That is something that you have to earn"? What happened to the Ernie Eves who said that to the Pembroke Observer back in March 2002?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I have here a certain bill that the leader of the official opposition introduced in this Legislature on April 23, 1992, called Bill 14, introduced in the name of Mr McGuinty, proposing to do away with teachers' strikes entirely in the province of Ontario. What happened to that Dalton McGuinty?

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, you know better than that. You know what my bill did.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Sorry to interrupt. We need to have a little quiet, please. Order. The leader of the official opposition has the floor. Sorry for the interruption, leader.

**Mr McGuinty:** Here's something else you'll be interested in recalling, Premier, in terms of what you said in

response to these kinds of approaches in the past. When your colleague Mr Flaherty proposed a ban on teachers' strikes, you said, "This type of dogmatic approach is the politics of the past. When we're throwing out these neat solutions scratched on the back of an envelope, we might want to think about what the cost is and if we really want to go there."

Premier, I am wondering if you've determined what kind of cost will now be connected with mandatory volunteer services in our schools right across Ontario. How much are you now prepared to pay for the basketball coach, the volleyball coach, the hockey coach, the soccer coach, the football coach, the drama coach, the after-school tutoring and the teachers who stay behind and help out with putting the yearbook together? What kind of solution have you scratched on the back of your envelope so that you have, instead, avoided the issue of doing what is right for our students, which is to introduce today in this Legislature nothing more than a clean bill, as we have done in keeping with the traditions of this House in the past? Why is it that you have chosen instead to put a second part to this bill which has province-wide implications to all policy? Why wouldn't you do the right thing, the honourable thing and the responsible thing? If you want to make a change to provincial education policy, then why wouldn't you stand up and call an election?

**Hon Mr Eves:** Yesterday cabinet passed a change to regulation 298 under the Education Act, which defines "strike." The only five activities that we included are the five I rhymed off to him today. So he might want to know what he's talking about before he yips and yaps. The only five activities that we are asking teachers to perform are the five I mentioned to him earlier in question period. Can he remember them? He should get a copy of Instant Hansard. Tell me which one of the five you are against, because that's all we are asking you to do.

## PENSION PLAN

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, sitting in the gallery are some 35 members of the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario Trusteed Pension Plan. They represent over 2,300 employees of farm and dairy co-operatives located all over Ontario. They worked hard all their lives and they thought they could count on a modest income in their retirement years from their employment pensions, but that hasn't happened. Their pension plan has been fatally damaged by a risky investment strategy gone terribly wrong, accompanied by a breakdown in the regulation of pensions in this province. This month, those very modest pension benefits were cut in half, and the plan will be wound up.

These people played by the rules, they worked hard all their lives, they met their responsibilities, and now the pension rules let them down. Will you take immediate action and have your Minister of Finance meet with the



plan's sponsors and develop an action plan to restore those benefits for people who deserve those hard-earned pension benefits?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Minister of Finance will respond very directly to the leader of the third party.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance):** I appreciate the honourable member raising this issue. As he knows, my office has been in touch with him. I will be meeting with the representatives of the pensioners after question period.

This is certainly a very difficult situation for these individuals. The financial regulator has been working with this particular pension plan to ensure it was on a sound footing. When the board trustees attempted to work out a resolution—when it became evident that there were problems there, they attempted to work out a resolution. I think, as the honourable member knows, virtually all of the board of trustees are made up of plan members or former plan members. They were not able to come to a solution. They exercised their rights to wind up the plan. That is their right under the plan, and the regulator is working with them to try to resolve that. In the meantime, the plan members have served notice that they will be taking legal action for breach of fiduciary duty against the board members.

1530

**Mr Hampton:** I asked the Premier the question because there is a long list of government failure here and a real need for government action. The Premier should know that multi-employer pension plans, such as this pension plan, are not covered by the pension insurance fund. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario, your government's pension regulator, had ample warning of the investment problems, yet you chose to do nothing.

Premier, your government made mistakes, the plan trustees made mistakes, the investment manager made mistakes, but it's these innocent pensioners who are now being forced to pay the price. What are you going to do to restore the full pensions that these people worked hard all their lives to have which have now been taken from them?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As the honourable member will know, the majority of workers do not have pension plans. The multi-employer plan, which this kind is, was an attempt to make sure that more workers were covered, so it did provide them with pension benefits. In this case, the plan ran into financial difficulty. The regulator had been working with them to put that plan on a solid basis. They had been able to do that until recently.

I appreciate the honourable member's concerns. We are attempting to find a resolution. There is a notice of legal action by the plan members against the board, which is also part of what is occurring right now.

**Mr Hampton:** The Premier should know and the minister should know that the only reason these folks were forced to go to court is because your government has been missing in action. We told you over a year ago that there were serious problems with Ontario's pension

regulatory system and with Ontario legislation that's supposed to protect pensions. We told you, for example, that there was no coverage for multi-employer pension plans. We told you, for example, that in other jurisdictions they already allow vesting at day one. Other jurisdictions already allow for portability. Other jurisdictions have already put in place tougher regulations to ensure that the investment adviser doesn't take some kind of risky jaunt with other people's money. Your government has been missing in action. You have done nothing.

My question for the Premier is this: Will you do something for these people and for all the people across Ontario who have contributed to pension plans but who are now facing increasingly risky situations because your government has chosen to do nothing?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I appreciate the honourable member's concern but it is a good, interesting point to note here that when your party was in government, sir, some of the things you are advocating today, you refused to do at the time.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate his point. We know we have an issue with this particular plan. The regulator is very sensitive to trying to work out a resolution here. As I've said, I'm going to meet with the representatives of the pensioners here to resolve this issue. Again, I would caution the honourable member, there may well be legal action against the board members. There are a number of issues that need to be resolved. The regulator has been on this case with this plan for quite some time to try to work out a resolution, and we need to do that.

## MEAT INSPECTION

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Again to the Premier: Premier, the report of mad cow disease in Alberta has rocked Ontario's beef cattle industry, and the people of Ontario are nervous about the quality of the food. We need to realize the importance of meat inspectors, just as we needed to realize the importance of water inspectors in the wake of Walkerton.

It was a meat inspector who pulled the suspect cow from the line of cattle going to slaughter in Alberta and deemed it, rightfully, unfit for consumption.

In 1995, Ontario had 150 full-time, committed and well-trained meat inspectors in the province. Today, under your government, there are eight full-time inspectors. The rest are part-time, on-contract people who lack training and lack experience. Premier, what do you intend to do to beef up the meat inspection in Ontario? Or do you think it's okay to ask private contractors—who do not have adequate training, many of whom move on after only a few weeks on the job—do you think that's adequate protection for the food safety of Ontario residents?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Minister of Agriculture and Food can respond very directly to the leader of the third party and correct the misinformation he left the public with.

**Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** First of all, I want to say to the people and the farmers



and processors of Ontario that we have done a thousand tests of beef in Ontario this year and not one has come back with BSE. Our research indicates that our food in Ontario is safe.

We have a number of things we do to ensure safety. We have meat inspectors who are trained adequately and full-time contract inspectors, and we do some 160,000 hours of inspections in a year. We also do more lab work than any other province for the number of cows we have in the province. With that, we have found that we have no BSE in this province.

**Mr Hampton:** It's about the quality of meat inspections and the quality of meat inspectors. In 1995, there were 150 full-time trained inspectors. Today there are only eight full-time inspectors; the rest are part-time contractors. This is what the auditor said in his 2001 report, when he noted that food safety deficiencies that could pose risks to human health were not corrected fast enough by your government. He also said that an effective meat inspection program was highly dependent upon recruitment and retention of trained staff. Your program has failed miserably at this, with over a 30% turnover rate. In other words, of the meat inspectors you have, 30% are always leaving the job. Why? Because you've frozen their pay, because you don't provide them with adequate training and because there's no pension and no benefits. So they leave. And what happens? Ontarians are put at risk.

I put to the Premier and to the Minister of Agriculture: in view in what has happened in Alberta, don't you think it's time to hire full-time, trained meat inspectors in Ontario once again?

**Hon Mrs Johns:** First off, I'd like to say this is a really important issue in rural Ontario and I can't believe the third party; I just can't believe it.

The meat inspectors in the province have a grievance before the grievance settlement board, and I'm not speaking to that issue today, but I want to tell you that we have increased our inspections in Ontario. As I said, we have done 160,000 inspections. That is more than we have ever done in the province. We have 35,000 additional inspector hours. For future processing activities we have 10 new food inspectors, scientists and technicians, the equivalent of 17,000 hours, to better target our meat inspection processes. There is not one animal slaughtered in this province without a meat inspector being there. This province has the safest meat inspection and slaughter abilities of any province. We should be proud of that. We should be standing here today and talking about the great job we're doing. We should be talking about the new facilities we have at the University of Guelph that we spent \$500,000—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

#### RENDERING INDUSTRY

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** My question is to Minister of Agriculture. The animal rendering industry

is in chaos today. Ontario produces 12,000 tonnes of dead animal stock and remnants from slaughter and restaurant grease. This is rendered into meat meal, and 40% to 60% of that is exported to the US. The border is now closed to Canadian meat meal because of BSE. Renderers have no capacity for storage. Farmers are going to have rotting carcasses under the blazing sun. I don't need to explain the potential health hazards from these rotting animals. The rendering industry has told your ministry there will be a crisis within days. Farmers have nowhere to take their dead animal stock.

So far, your response has been to suggest a meeting next week. That's not good enough. We need you to take action immediately. Why has your ministry been unwilling to meet immediately to address this major public health and economic crisis in the rendering industry?

**Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** Let me say that the rendering industry is a very important industry in the province, and this government has done a great deal to ensure it has a future in the province.

I understand the border is closed, but we have every intention of working with the federal government to quickly resolve this issue. It's important for the beef production industry, it's important for the processing industry and it's important for the customers who eat beef in Ontario to have this border open.

I was talking to the federal government today—to Minister Vancief and to Shirley McLellan out of Alberta—and they both assure me they are doing everything they can to open this border as quickly as possible. Ontario is monitoring, we're pushing and we're working to ensure that the beef industry has a strong future in Ontario.

1540

**Mr Hoy:** The rendering industry wants you to talk with them. Minister, I just mentioned that 12,000 tonnes of this material is in place every week. The economic impact of BSE will be terrible across the cattle industry. We need to act to ensure this doesn't become a public health crisis. The normal day-to-day by-products of abattoirs and processing plants can't just be left lying around. They won't wait calmly while we try to get the border reopened. They are going to rot and be a potential source of disease to other animals and perhaps to humans.

Your ministry has been treating this like a secondary issue. Preserving the public health of Ontarians should be the first thing on your mind. Instead of fobbing off this issue until next week, will you commit to having the ministry take action? Will you immediately call a meeting with the key renderers and develop a strategy for dealing with this serious economic and public health problem now?

**Hon Mrs Johns:** I'm surprised at the tone of the opposition on a day like this for the agricultural community. But let me say that the ministry has been meeting with rendering companies. I'm happy to have the ministry meet. I'm happy to meet; my door is open. I've been out consulting for the last eight weeks. They could have

easily come and talked to me, and I'm happy to have them come in.

But let me say that we're doing everything possible on this side of the House to lower the concerns about this. We know there have been a thousand tests done in Ontario. We know that none of the cows have any positive reaction or show of BSE. Our research tells us that the beef in Ontario is safe. We all need to remember that. We all need to work on that premise. We all need to be supportive of our agriculture and agribusinesses in Ontario. It's the second-largest industry, and it makes this province tick. Our food is safe.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Just before we continue, we have a former member in the members' gallery west. We have with us Barb Fisher, the member for Bruce in the 32nd Parliament.

We also have a federal colleague, Mr Peter MacKay, the member for Pictou-Antigonish-Guysborough.

We welcome our honoured guests.

New question, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

### NURSES

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** My question is for the hard-working Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, who, despite the fearmongering of the opposition, solved the double cohort.

Minister, actually I wanted to ask you this question last week. As you are aware, last week was National Nursing Week, when we celebrate the contributions nurses make to improve our care and standard of living. Ontario is the destination of choice for many internationally trained nurses who want to put their skills to work in our health care system. Our government is committed to helping them become licensed to practise in Ontario. One of the excellent programs our government supports is the CARE for Nurses program. This is a partnership with Toronto's WoodGreen Community Centre, the Kabayan community centre, St Michael's Hospital, the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care and St Joseph's Health Centre. The CARE program is designed to increase the number of internationally trained nurses who pass the licence exam and become certified to practise nursing in Ontario.

Minister, recently you announced additional support for the CARE program. Can you please tell the House about this initiative and how it will help to improve nurses working in Ontario?

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues):** I am here, obviously, with my colleagues in this Legislative Assembly to continue the celebration of nurses in Ontario and to congratulate them on the great job they do every day on the front lines. On

April 29, I was at George Brown College here in Toronto as we made an announcement for the CARE nursing project. This is a project that supports more internationally trained nurses in being trained and given the kind of education they need to pass their credentials and their exams so they can get jobs. We announced \$475,000.

I will say this is a model for the country, right here in Toronto. Now 115 nurses have become licensed, and 94 are working as registered nurses or registered practical nurses since this CARE program began. It's a great success story, and I hope we'll do much more of it.

**Mr Gill:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. CARE for Nurses is just one of many programs that our government is supporting to help internationally trained professionals put their skills to work in Ontario. I understand, Minister, that we have programs to support immigrants who are pharmacists, technologists, midwives, computer programmers and a host of other professions that are high-demand in our economy.

Can you please tell the House what the results of the CARE for Nurses program have been so far and how it fits into our government's overall agenda to help internationally trained professionals practise their chosen profession in Ontario?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Again, this new money will allow another 100 internationally trained nurses to be licensed and to get jobs. It's long overdue. It's a great success story.

My colleague the Minister of Health has a program to expand opportunities for internationally trained physicians. The CARE for Nurses program has more than doubled the success for internationally trained nurses to be successful in writing their exams, which is the most difficult part. Before this program, 33% of foreign-trained nurses passed the exam; now 70% of participants are succeeding. We should all be celebrating on behalf of them and their families.

The internationally trained pharmacy graduate program is in its early stages, but we already have 96 people licensed as internationally trained pharmacists. I see the former Minister of Health, who was supportive of this in the very beginning. It's a great thing to be invited to their graduation and to honour them and to share in their success with their families.

This is just two of 13 bridge training programs in Ontario. We've invested \$15 million in bridge training programs, Mr Speaker, and I know you support this as well in your own riding. So thank you very much.

### PRIVATE HOSPITALS

**Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, last week we learned that a preferred bid has been selected for the private hospital plan at William Osler Health Centre in Brampton. From this it's clear that you've decided to push forward with your plans to privatize health care in this province. You still have not tabled any evidence to suggest that this is cheaper, faster or safer for the public in Ontario, and yet still you press forward.



I'd like to read a quote to you from Mr Romanow. He said, "Many of the so-called 'new solutions' being proposed for health care—pay-as-you-go, user and facility fees, fast-track treatment for the lucky few and wait-lists for everyone else—are not new at all. We've been there. They are old solutions that didn't work then, and were discarded for that reason. And the preponderance of evidence is that they will not work today."

Minister, will you agree to stop plans to privatize our hospitals, freeze this contract process and go to the people in an election so that they will tell you they do not want to privatize?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** The Dalton McGuinty agenda is to stop a new hospital being built in Brampton, Ontario, for the people of Brampton and for the people of Caledon and for the people of Mississauga, to stop a 608-bed modern facility helping to attract more doctors and nurses, better equipment for our community care and hospital care, all university-accessible, all available under the Canada Health Act and the Public Hospitals Act. That's what a Dalton McGuinty government would do. It would stop a brand new hospital in Brampton. We on this side of the House want better health care in Brampton, want better health care in Ontario. We're going to move ahead.

1550

**Ms Papatello:** Minister, what you just said is absolute nonsense, and you know it. What we're telling you today is that not only are these private hospitals for Brampton, for Ottawa, for Markham-Stouffville, you've moved ahead with privatizing CTs and MRIs, and to this day you have tabled no evidence that it is safer, cheaper or more accessible to the public. The only way these private companies will make money, Minister, is if they operate with a different set of rules. It's the only way they can make money.

Minister, it is incumbent on you and your government to go to the people and ask them if they want privatization in the health system. We call on you: call an election before you let this happen. Call an election, Minister.

**Hon Mr Clement:** In this document, despite the honourable member's protestations, Dalton McGuinty promises to stop new hospitals being built under a public-private formula to make sure they happen earlier, to make sure they're available for the people of Ontario.

Our leader, our Premier, has said we want more health care, we want better health care and we want health care to be universally accessible. We want to use the private sector and the public sector to get better health care. The people of Ontario will choose. I know they'll choose the big plan, not this plan.

## URBAN STRATEGY

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** My question is for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who's also responsible for urban issues. Coming from a predominantly urban riding, I'm particularly pleased to know that the government is

listening to, and in turn responding to, the concerns of our urban centres. I believe it's important for those who live in urban centres to be assured that our government has invested in strong municipalities that will remain globally competitive in the 21st century.

This government has demonstrated its commitment to cities through its responsible funding directions and decisions and sound policy initiatives. Minister, could you please enlighten this House as to your findings from your recently released urban consultation report.

**Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I thank the member from Scarborough Centre, who is a true advocate for her constituents, for raising the question here today. Ontario's urban centres are the lifeblood of our provincial economy. As I have said before, no two cities in this province are alike, and as our Premier has stated, we need to respond to the challenges facing our cities. Our Smart Growth initiative and the memorandum of understanding which we have with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario are two major examples of how we have responded effectively and in a tangible way for our cities.

I should note that our continuing discussions with cities will not focus exclusively on revenues, but rather on partnerships that will allow for more effective and efficient ways of doing business. In my report 2003 and Beyond: A Smart Approach for Ontario's Urban Centres, I detailed the needs that were expressed to me by Ontario's urban leaders. Urban centres are looking for long-term funding for support and infrastructure, sustainable sources of revenue—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I'm afraid the associate minister's time is up. Supplementary?

**Ms Mushinski:** I'm particularly happy to hear about the part that you're playing in improving our relationship with municipal partners. I know it's your personal initiative that has a lot to do with this, and I believe that's to be applauded.

There was a great deal of anticipation, prior to the federal government's throne speech earlier this year, with regard to assistance for cities.

*Interjections.*

**Ms Mushinski:** Yes, I know that members on the opposite side will be very interested in the response to this, given that their federal cousins did nothing. In fact, the result was absolutely less than satisfactory.

I would like to know what this government is doing to help urban centres deal with the ongoing challenges they face on a day-to-day basis.

**Hon Mrs Molinari:** What I heard from my consultations from the urban centres is that they need long-term funding and support for infrastructure, sustainable sources of revenue and a coordinated way of responding to some of their needs. The federal government has paid lip service to supporting our urban centres and we now need to hold them to their word and have them become a full partner and participate in helping our municipalities.

In the meantime, our government is proposing to help our cities by building and expanding Ontario's highways,

supporting the growth of public transit and resolving key challenges such as waste management, brownfield redevelopment and affordable housing as part of an integrated plan. We will also create a powerful Smart Growth board for each of Ontario's five regions to lead the way in putting Smart Growth principles into action. It's our job as a government to provide the leadership required to meet the challenges facing cities today.

### HYDRO GENERATION

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I have a question for the Minister of Energy. May 12 was the deadline for your proposals to put dirty diesel generators in urban neighbourhoods across southern Ontario. I've asked that you make public these proposals so that people will know when and where they're going to have one of your dirty diesel generators in their neighbourhood. You've refused to make your proposals public. Minister, don't you think people deserve to know whether or not you're going to put one of your hyper-polluting diesel generators in their neighbourhood?

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I have been clear in stating quite unequivocally that there will be no dirty diesel generators going into urban areas. I know that comes as bad news for the member opposite, as he's seeking to fearmonger and continually arouse concern right across Ontario. He might want to stand in his place and tell this House why, when he was around the cabinet table, they issued more than 500 megawatts of new dirty diesel power generators in this province; why, when he had an opportunity, he could have stood up for the environment. I want to know, will the leader of the third party stand in his place and tell the people of Ontario why he did nothing, not only about dirty diesel but about dirty coal, for five long years in Ontario? Will he do that? Will he come clean for the people of Ontario?

**Mr Hampton:** It's clear the Minister of Energy is living in his continuing fantasyland. What you refuse to tell people is that those so-called 500 megawatts of diesel generation were hospital standbys that were never used. The problem for people in Ontario this summer is, as they know from your failure of hydro privatization and deregulation last summer, that there's every likelihood they will be used now.

But my question to the minister is this: I outlined yesterday how the state of California, when your friends at Enron were manipulating hydroelectricity supply there, used energy conservation and energy efficiency strategies to reduce peak demand in the summer of 2001 by almost 5,500 megawatts. Why aren't you pursuing an energy conservation/energy efficiency strategy, instead of proposing to start up dirty diesel generators across neighbourhoods in southern Ontario?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The member opposite wants to know where the dirty diesel generators are going in urban areas: nowhere. He continues to perpetrate a myth.

But I thought I had seen everything. I've been in this House for eight years. I've listened continuously to ques-

tions from the leader of the third party, talking about how those of us on this side always extol the virtues of California. I read the clippings this morning and it said, "Hampton Lauds California Energy Motto." I thought I had seen everything. He's wanting us in this province to look to California for advice on energy. Well, I'll tell you one person who did. The person who heads Energy Probe, Tom Adams, said, "Hampton's conservation claims are 'not credible.'"

1600

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

#### DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2003, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** I'm pleased to speak to this. I will be sharing my time with the member for Essex.

It is difficult to know where to start. When going through this speech from the throne, it promises Ontario—actually, it's probably more of a threat than a promise, but I'd like to share with the people of Ontario some of the points that leapt out at me as I ran through the throne speech.

The first thing that I found rather startling was the statement made by this government that, "for the first time since 1908, an Ontario government has introduced five consecutive balanced budgets." That may be their statement, and that may even be their perception. It may very well be that this is an innocent statement because they don't really understand the budget process, but the people that do, such as Standard and Poor's and a number of other professional bond rating agencies, say the budget is not balanced. The budget is contingent on selling assets of over \$2 billion. That is somewhat similar to an individual saying, "My household budget balances for the year, as long as I sell the house."

What these assets are is not defined. Will they be sold at fire sale prices to actually balance the budget or will they be sold or not sold? That statement, I think, is somewhat misleading to the people of Ontario. This is not a balanced budget, according to any of the financial experts in North America.

It says, "Your government has paid down \$5 billion in provincial debt and will continue to pay down Ontario's debt to ensure long-term growth and prosperity." I think to balance that, we need to point out that because of this government's mishandling of hydro and of the entire electricity issue, the provincial debt—there's only one taxpayer and it may be a debt attributed to hydro, but the fact is that the debt is going up every day to cover the energy costs for us purchasing electricity. It's in a separate budget line but I would say—and I'm sure they've



used the line themselves but they don't accept it—there is one taxpayer. For the people of Ontario, our debt is increasing each and every day on the electricity side.

It says here that they are wanting to work with small business to encourage job creation. My experience, from small businesses in my constituency, is that this government—while talking about tax cuts and talking about taking less money, the retail sales tax branch has been absolutely attacking small businesses, coming into one- and two-person operations that do not have a high income, do not have the expertise to fight against a ministry that says, “You owe us more money. You can appeal, but first you give us some money, then we'll deal with the appeal.” I think this government has been absolutely brutal to small business, and that seems somewhat at odds with their statement about being supportive of small business.

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act was passed by this government with no teeth, with no action in it, really, that applied to the average life of an average citizen in Ontario. As far as the Ontario disability support program, this government continues to force thousands of Ontarians with disabilities to live \$7,000 below the poverty level.

The statement says, “Your government recognizes that there are some Ontarians who need extra help to cope with disabilities. It understands that people with disabilities often have special needs that make it difficult for them to work. That's why it will increase Ontario disability support program payments to better help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and dignified lives.” A very interesting statement—first of all, extremely vague; no commitment to numbers. But I understand why they're not committing to numbers in the throne speech. It's because when one examines this infobudget that they did at an auto parts plant, there's no provision in the budget for an increase in the ODSP. They can't put numbers down because they budgeted zero in their ODSP plan.

It says, “Your government will reform support for children with special needs to ensure that parents have a greater say in how their needs are met.” I talk, and I know government members talk, to constituents who have children with major difficulties. The parents are striving, with all they can, to keep the children at home. Keeping the children at home with them is the best for the child, best for the parents and best for the economy, but this government has been absolutely miserly on special-services-at-home agreements that allow the children to continue to remain in the house with their parents and receive services. This won't improve that. This, again, is gobbledygook. We need to be concerned about keeping children with disabilities in the most nurturing environment. That's what their parents said. I'm not just talking about individuals under 15, 16 or 18 years old. There are adult children who may physically be 25, 30 or 40, but they still will receive the best possible service at home with their parents. This province needs to do much better than they're doing on that side.

There is reference in here, as there is in every speech, to cracking down on welfare fraud. I would suggest that at the same time they actively pursue the millions and millions of dollars in unpaid corporate taxes that this province is making very little or no effort to collect.

They talk about their energy supplies: “Your government will ensure that Ontarians have a supply of power today, tomorrow and into the future.” This government, with the boondoggle that they made of Ontario Hydro and electricity, has put thousands and thousands of jobs at risk in this province. Larger industries that are now paying two or three or four or five times what they used to pay for electricity can no longer be competitive in the world market. The advantage of having a business in Ontario for generations has been electricity at cost—an ensured supply at a fair price. Now industry, over and over, is saying, “Our costs have escalated so much that jobs—this government that preaches jobs doesn't actually walk the walk, and has jeopardized thousands of good jobs in Ontario over its mismanagement of electricity.” Again, those words ring hollow.

Here's a statement that hits pretty close to home: “To increase the number of nurses practising in Ontario, your government will launch an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program.” They're going to try to attract more nurses to Ontario and keep the ones that are here. Here's the problem, folks: in my community, Quinte Healthcare, a hospital amalgamation that consists of Picton, Trenton, Belleville and North Hastings, is reducing nursing hours and laying off nurses. Why? Because this government has underfunded Quinte Healthcare by \$2 million. They are allowing nurses to be laid off and reducing the number of nursing hours.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** For the member from Northumberland: you know that it's true that the nursing hours are being cut.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** They do not have money to have nurses in the hospital. What kind of a hospital is it when they're forced to lay off nurses, not because of what they want, but because this government has underfunded the operating costs? Nurses are being laid off, while at the same time this rhetoric in here says that they're going to attract nurses.

We're seeing in Ontario half of our nurses being offered part-time hours, having to work at more than one hospital site, being given no benefits, while at the same time other jurisdictions are absolutely luring them away. The words are extremely hollow on this one.

Cancer care: two thirds of patients in Ontario, when diagnosed with cancer, do not get the treatment within the time frame recommended by the medical community. Within eight weeks, they do not get to start the radiation. This says, “No child, parent, senior or any citizen of a compassionate province should have to wait one moment longer than necessary to receive care.” Two thirds of individuals in this province are not receiving the care in the time frame that they need for cancer.



They talk about improving hospitals. What they're going to do is allow the private sector to build hospitals and then rent them back. Isn't it strange, in our average, everyday life outside of this chamber, that each of us struggles to buy a residence, whether it be a condominium or a house? We want to move out of a rental apartment and into an apartment, condominium or house that we own, because we know that it is cheaper in the long run to own it rather than to forever pay rent. This move toward having the hospitals built by the private sector and owned by the private sector will force the government to pay rent forever on these buildings. Long after they're paid off, the rent will continue. This is taking what should be patient money and deflecting it into profit for a corporation.

1610

"Your government," it says under the education component, "will provide tools and resources to ensure phonics are available to all schools."

Phonics never left our school system. Phonics has always been available and is one of the approaches used in teaching. Not every child learns the same way. Not every child benefits from the same program. Schools have used a multitude of approaches and techniques to teach reading and writing. The inference that phonics has gone and this government is going to bring it back is not correct. Phonics has always been there.

Finally, I would refer to a statement which says, "Over the past several years, your government has begun improving public service. While the Ontario public service has been reduced by 23%, it has won international awards."

It may have won international awards, but it hasn't won local awards. You be an individual in Ontario who needs to deal with the Family Responsibility Office. Just try to get through to them. You be an individual in Ontario who is trying to deal with ODSP, trying to get an application, trying to speak with someone. The rest of the world may envy it, but that's because they don't have to phone the 1-800 numbers and wait 27 minutes for a recording to tell them to continue to wait. The Ontario public service has been under attack, and when you attack the public service you attack the citizens of Ontario, who need access to those services. Those services have been reduced.

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** I am pleased to stand today to say a few words about the throne speech that was given by this government just a few days ago. I want to remind people how this is really an anticlimax. In the normal course of events what we get from a government, once the session has been prorogued, is a throne speech which lays out in general terms what it is the government wants to do in the next session. Sometimes, although not in this case, it's called a vision. The reason I say that is that I don't think there is any vision in this throne speech. But in any event, a throne speech lays out in general terms what is going to be done, and that is then followed by a budget.

But what happened in this case? We got the so-called Magna budget first, before the vision or general plan was

out. Then the government said, "We're going to go to the people and ask them what they want in the throne speech."

Well, tell me: how can you go to the people and find out what they want in the throne speech after the budget? That's kind of putting the proverbial cart before the horse. But that's the way this worked. So we have to deal with the throne speech as it's given. I'm not so sure how much of it was from those consultations with the people. I can't recall, in southwestern Ontario, or at least down our way, any general invitation to the people to meet with and advise the government on what they'd like in the throne speech.

In any event, there are a couple of areas that I'd like to at least cover. One was agriculture. I think in the throne speech the government said that in the upcoming weeks they "will unveil a comprehensive rural strategy aimed at addressing concerns raised by the people in rural communities." Well, excuse me, but I thought that's what they said they went out to do before the throne speech. So I don't know when it is that they're going to communicate with the people in rural Ontario.

Everyone would know—and those who don't, I would hope to advise—that it was over two months ago that our party gave what we feel and what we have heard from the people of Ontario, those points that should be in a government policy when it comes to agriculture.

One of the main points in our policy is that rural schools must be protected. I haven't seen anything in this throne speech that would suggest that this government is giving its obligations to maintaining rural schools. Speaker, you're from rural Ontario. You know as well as I that it's not quite the same as, for example, the situation we're dealing with in a city like Toronto. I suggest to folks that this throne speech gives some shallow words about a comprehensive rural strategy that addresses concerns raised by the people in rural communities, but it really says nothing. That's what we look for in a throne speech, and in a subsequent budget.

Another thing that's talked about in this throne speech is democracy, that there will be more free votes. Well, if today is any indication of this government's intention when it comes free votes, I suggest that you don't trust a word about it that's in this throne speech. Because today, when the vote was taken on an issue that we've been debating over the last week or so, that being the contempt motion, we know that there were government members who spoke out against the government having presented its budget outside this Legislature. We know that there were members on the government side who criticized their own government. We know that there were members on the government side who weren't happy, who weren't pleased, who didn't agree with a budget that was presented outside this Legislature. Yet what did we see today? Every government member who was present in this House stood up and voted against that motion. In fact, it wasn't even a motion that accused the government of contempt; it was merely a motion that said it's the right of this Legislature to have the budget presented here



first. What I can only assume now is that this government, at some future date—and frankly, after an election that seems to be impending, I hope they don't have the opportunity in the near future—a Conservative government would say, "Well, the motion was defeated," albeit that it was defeated by Conservatives, "and from now on the field is free. We can present a budget anywhere. We can go up to Canada's Wonderland, for goodness' sake, and present a budget." So much for free votes.

We talk a lot about free votes in this place, and I'm the first to admit that in the parliamentary party system that we have, free votes are rare. I would be one who would like to see more free votes. But they're always misinterpreted. It doesn't matter which party it is; if there is that rare occasion where there's a free vote, then the leader of that particular party, be it the party in power or the opposition, is said not to have their caucus under control. I do want to say this about free votes, and when you can have a free vote, that may not be totally understood by those who aren't in this place every day: each of us, to kind of describe it, belongs to a team. I know from my experience on our side that there are a number of issues on which we do not totally agree. There are a number of issues on which the discussion in caucus gets very interesting. Sometimes the tempers can even flare a little bit. But what happens at the end of the day is if you belong to the team, you give your input, the leader takes a consensus and he also takes into consideration what a Liberal position would be, and at the end of the day we all come out of the room, and in most cases we're all on the same side and we're willing to support that position. So free votes are an interesting concept, but there really aren't that many times when a truly free vote can be taken so that it would not be misinterpreted as the leader of that particular caucus not having control.

I still am having a real problem with believing that this government has any commitment to democracy. We only have to look back at the record of the government and how many times it has brought in closure of debate—that's not democracy—how many times we've not had the opportunity to take an issue to the public through public meetings. So I don't know about democracy being espoused by this government. I'm afraid that it has been, in this Legislature, one of the most undemocratic governments that we've had. So the throne speech is just so many words. In the words of the minister across, certainly, let's call an election. Then we'll really find out where democracy lies.

1620

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Questions and comments?

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** One of the glaring omissions in the throne speech involved lack of any mention of what this government intends to do with the Sudbury Regional Hospital. That's a glaring omission indeed, because it has been over a year now since there has been absolutely no construction on phase 2 of the regional hospital, a hospital that I remind you was forced to be amalgamated, three into one, as the result of an order by the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

A couple of weeks before the government's throne speech, the Premier announced that he wanted to have some consultation with people about what should be in the document. Frankly, in my very cynical day that day, I thought that the throne speech was probably already written, but I decided to use that as an opportunity so that people in our community could have their say, particularly about our regional hospital. So I held a press conference with our NDP candidate, and we blew up the page on health care that said, "What is the most important need for health care in your community?" and we put stickers on it that said, "Sudbury says, 'Finish our hospital now'" in English and French, because it is the most important health care issue in our community, and the government has done nothing to deal with the mess that the hospital has been left in for over a year now.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission grossly underestimated the cost to amalgamate three hospitals into one on an existing site. They grossly underestimated, for example, the cost of the equipment that would be needed to furnish a newly renovated regional hospital. As a result, we have a horrific cost overrun, we've had no construction on phase 2 for over a year now and we have people in the community who have fundraised now to the tune of over \$25 million, and still no construction in sight.

This is supposed to be the hospital that's used as a teaching hospital for the new medical school in northern Ontario, if it ever gets completed. So I say to the government, enough is enough. It's time to finish our regional hospital.

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I'm pleased to have a chance to comment on the speech by the member for Essex. It may come as a surprise that I share many of the views he expressed. I thought he gave a fair comment with respect to free votes in this place and the problems that have been encountered on all sides of the House, no matter who's in government or who's in opposition. I think it does become an issue of confidence in the leader of the political party, in opposition or in government. I think he was correct to point that out, and all of us perhaps, in all three political parties, can accept some responsibility, as I think society as a whole—the media, the system as a whole—hasn't been as conducive to that as it is in some jurisdictions.

While I support a smaller House, one of the disadvantages of it is that you have a bigger executive branch on the government side. So, for example, even on Thursday morning votes, if the executive branch isn't here, the opposition would have a two-to-one majority, which of course poses legitimate questions for all people. So I thought he raised some good points on that.

I am cautious, though, when members of his party say—and the member opposite, to be fair, didn't in his speech—"We're better—"

**Mr Crozier:** I basically commented on it, but you didn't listen.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I did listen to it.



To the member opposite, we should all be cautious when people try to say, "We're better than others, we're different," because his party leader has talked about a democratic deficit in Ontario. Yet, forgetting about free votes in this House, what his leader has said is that he's not going to allow free votes to get to this House. In four ridings so far, including the ridings of Scarborough Centre and Ottawa-Vanier, what Dalton McGuinty has said is, "I know there was a free vote scheduled, but I'm cancelling it. With the stroke of a pen, I will choose who the candidate is."

I just ask people to think, is this the guy who's going to deliver real democracy in Ontario, who for the first time takes over the power to nominate candidates?

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** First of all, I want to congratulate both members, my colleagues from Prince Edward-Hastings and from Essex, for their comments on the throne speech.

In this throne speech, I don't know what we are getting at. At the present time, with all those announcements that were made, as well as the platform released last Friday, already this government has accumulated an additional debt of \$21 billion since they came into power in 1995.

They also referred to the rural schools. They keep saying they will come up with financial support for the school boards to keep our rural schools open. In my own riding, at the present time, we're talking of closing 15 schools because this government is not giving any money to school boards to keep up the maintenance that is needed in our rural schools. They will give the money to build new schools, but there is no money available to keep open those small schools in small communities, which are the core of the community.

Also, in the throne speech they said they would improve the disability program. There is no mention of this in the budget at all. I would probably call it the auto parts budget, because it was released at the auto parts plant.

Also, we referred to hydro. At the present time, this government hasn't been fair with all the enterprises in Ontario. Some people are paying 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, and others are paying 10.55 cents per kilowatt hour. We have been unfair to those small businesses. Two-employee businesses will probably have to close down.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the presentations made by the members for Prince Edward-Hastings and Essex. As I'm going to do, they spoke about what was disappointing in the speech from the throne and what actually wasn't in the speech from the throne that should have been—because there are people out there waiting on this government to pull them back from the precipice of total disaster because of the agenda of this government.

There was no reference in this budget to northern Ontario on the issues of softwood lumber and hydro, what they were going to do to protect the economy of that very important part of the province in front of those two very troubling agendas we see in the paper every

night being negotiated or talked about by the senior levels of government. There was nothing that indicates they actually understand the real threat that's there, and there was no indication of what their approach is going to be to protect and save those communities and the forests up there and to protect the energy that we have seen as an asset for so long, something we could use to attract investment in northern Ontario, and which now is being turned over to the private sector.

Wawa is on the way to disaster. They have tried to get a meeting with the Minister of Energy and cannot. For over a year now, they have been phoning, writing, faxing and e-mailing the Minister of Energy, looking for a meeting so they can sit down with him and share with him the damage that's being done, but he won't even respond to those overtures.

The other thing I want to very briefly reference is the reference in the speech from the throne to an increase in ODSP. For a couple of days, you left the disabled out there hanging, thinking that maybe they were going to get something—but when and how much? Then, finally the other day it was announced that it was going to be 5%, a mere pittance, no retroactivity and nothing indexed to the cost of living, and you're not going to do this until you get elected as government. However, that isn't going to happen.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member has two minutes to reply.

1630

**Mr Crozier:** I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt, the Minister of Energy, my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and the member from Sault Ste Marie.

I want to go back for just a moment, though, to the comments of the Minister of Energy. I didn't say we are any better; I do agree with you that we are different. It's that difference that has made me comfortable being a Liberal. I can say in all sincerity and honesty that there is a significant difference between this government and a government that would be under our leader, Dalton McGuinty. I think back to a former Premier and leader of our party who said that Liberalism is the pursuit of change with the dictates of compassion.

We thought the current Premier was going to be a compassionate Premier. He was going to be different from Mike Harris. It turns out that he's not so different from Mike Harris. It depends on what he's talking about on any given day as to how different he is. He chose to go against Mike Harris's best wishes and not privatize Hydro but instead to roll up, so far, about \$1.5 billion in debt.

The Minister of Energy, who got up to speak about my comments, is the one who has floated the idea—and it may have changed by now—that they'd have those dirty diesel engines producing electricity in this province this summer. I guess we all have to reflect on what we truly represent.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I'm very proud of this speech from the throne. I'm proud



because the speech truly reflects thoughts and hopes of people across Ontario. I'm proud because it addresses some of the key priorities: health care and education of course, and agriculture, a key concern in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

I'm very proud that what I see in the speech from the throne is a structure that's been built on very strong economic fundamentals that we've put in place over the last seven years, fundamentals of tax cuts and related job creation, deficit elimination of course and debt reduction. I'm proud because I know that through maintaining these strong economic fundamentals, we've positioned ourselves for those key investments in health care and education that people cherish in this province. Simply put, our speech from the throne delivers the goods and puts us on the right track toward an even stronger Ontario where a robust economy can support investment in those services we cherish.

This spring's speech was unique in that it was inspired by concerns and thoughts—dreams, if you will—of Ontarians as never before. Before the speech was created, we asked the citizens of Ontario to share ideas. Ten thousand people did just that, and we have listened. We've listened to farmers at consultations across the province. One in Hagersville in my riding comes to mind, where Ag Minister Helen Johns presented some of the main agricultural concerns reflected and dealt with by our government and reflected on the challenges faced by our small family farms.

Over several days of debate in this Legislature late last year, our government voted to push ahead with legislation to protect farms from labour disruptions. This was mentioned in the speech. This legislation will ensure that while farm workers are allowed to organize, they cannot hold a farmer's livelihood hostage through work stoppages. Our family farms, certainly in my area, have enough to worry about; for example, tobacco taxes, the more recent concerns our beef cattlemen are now dealing with, adverse weather, and crop diseases. The last thing they need is to be concerned about threats of job action. Our speech from the throne confirms our government's intention to fully implement the Agricultural Employees Protection Act to protect the rights of both farmers and farm employees.

The throne speech also addresses farm concerns around nutrient management. Over the last several years, I've been involved in four series of consultations across the province. Through those consultations, the number one concern of farmers and others in the farm sector remains the same: dollars. The question was heard again and again at these meetings: how are we going to pay for the upgrades; how will we pay for the work required to come into compliance with nutrient management regulations? Again, after listening to the speech from the throne, I can say to farmers of Ontario that we hear you, and the government has obviously listened. We've reiterated our commitment to our farmers that society will share the cost of paying for the changes that will ultimately benefit us all. The government will be there to

continue working with farmers to provide them with financial support for the nutrient management strategies that will not only keep our environment protected but also ensure that our farms remain strong.

Farmers told us that we needed to continue protection and stability for agriculture from drought, adverse weather, disease and fluctuating markets. Again, in referring to the speech from the throne, we have delivered on a commitment to continue that protection through an array of safety net programs.

Further on issues of concern in my part of rural Ontario in the days and weeks that led up to the speech from the throne, the people in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant told us of the need to address those unique, special challenges faced by smaller rural communities, oftentimes dominated by the larger urban society. Once again, we heard what people have been saying, and we will unveil a comprehensive rural strategy—I know this was mentioned across the way earlier this afternoon—to strengthen our rural economy, protect services and preserve what we consider our cherished way of life in rural Ontario.

We realize that while rural challenges in general need to be addressed, the hurdles faced by rural schools in particular must also be overcome. In my area, school closures in rural communities has been a constant issue over the years, and I've argued consistently for school boards to consider the long-lasting area impact and the importance of local schools to the education of our children before they make any hasty decisions, and also to take into consideration the socio-economic impact on a community of closing a school, really to recognize that in our area in particular the rural high school is really the heart and centre of a small town.

The bottom line is that our local high schools obviously serve an educational function, but they are vital to the recreational needs, the social and economic needs, the cultural well-being and, in a sense, the survival of many of our rural communities. We see the door has opened through this throne speech, that every option can now be considered with respect to dealing with an ongoing, almost chronic, issue in much of rural Ontario with high school closings.

This may sound strange to residents of much of our rapidly expanding, urban-centred, go-big-or-go-home society, but when it comes to schools and providing a quality education, in many cases smaller is better. A number of studies recognize this fact. Many school boards in the United States have come to realize that while the big box schools and their little box portables may well maximize some of the enrolment efficiencies that can be accrued, in many cases they can also minimize quality learning potential. As a result, many of these large schools have gone to great lengths to artificially create a small school atmosphere. In Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, we already have that small-school atmosphere, and we're working hard to preserve it. That's why I was quite heartened to see our government has listened to the concerns of rural Ontario and has announced a \$50-million



rural education strategy to address rural school challenges.

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As many in the Legislature will know, Dr James Downey has been appointed to head up the charge, and I remain confident that he will guide the strategy in the right direction to answer the questions many parents and children have been asking in rural schools. I would encourage all members of this Legislature from all sides of the House to prepare and send forward a submission to Dr Downey.

Our education quality reforms, as reflected in the speech from the throne, including new curriculum and standardized testing, have restored excellence and accountability to a system that in many ways had lost its way. In the throne speech, the government reaffirms its commitment to fully implement the Rozanski report, including more support for special education and teachers' salaries.

We will give parents more choice to enrol their children in any available school within their board. Parental choice will be further supported through the continued implementation of the equity in education tax credit for parents of children at independent schools. Again, I was quite heartened to see this message presented once again in the throne speech.

Parents continue to tell me that if they're going to foot the bill for their children's education through their tax dollars, they should also have the right to decide where their children will be educated. Supporting parental choice and the equity in education tax credit will ensure that parents have a say in just what type of school and what type of education their children will receive.

You will note that also included in the throne speech were commitments to make phonics teaching tools available to all schools. It was clarified again.

We will provide \$1.6 billion for special education in 2002-03, and close to \$2 billion is being budgeted over three years to fully implement the Rozanski report, including more funding for, yet again, special education and teachers' salaries.

Speaker, the recent SARS emergency—and I know you referred to this earlier today—has shown all of us across Ontario, across Canada, the speed with which a health crisis can take shape and the need for a strong health care system to deal with, control and ultimately end the spread of an emerging disease. The SARS emergency has also shown us all where the real strength in our system lies. The strength lies in our doctors and nurses, who have dedicated themselves every day to get the job done and bring under control what has become an emergency in many other areas in the world.

In the speech from the throne, we announced that we would implement a number of initiatives to help doctors, to help nurses across this province deliver the top-notch services every Ontarian deserves. For example, we will introduce guaranteed wait times for procedures such as general surgery, cataract procedures, cancer treatment, hip and knee replacements as well as for diagnostic

services such as MRIs. I do point out that 20 more MRIs and five more CT scanners are in the works. We've also proposed an historic commitment in the battle against cancer by investing \$1 billion to establish the new Cancer Research Institute of Ontario.

We will increase the number of international medical graduates by 20%. Also, the doctor shortage crisis being felt most acutely in rural and northern Ontario will be addressed on a number of fronts. We will provide free tuition to current and future medical students who agree to practise in underserved areas or agree to join family health networks. We will also provide free tuition to nurses who agree to practise in underserved areas. I am yet again proud to say that we've boosted health care spending to a record level of \$28 billion a year. That's an annual increase of \$10 billion since 1995.

Since 1995, again making reference to our speech from the throne, our government has helped create more than 1.1 million new jobs. We've dramatically cut taxes, we've removed barriers to growth, eliminated an \$11-billion deficit, started paying down Ontario's debt and, as all would know, we've helped 600,000 people get off welfare and find the dignity that comes with a job.

How does this occur? Again, only through a strong economy that supports investment in priorities such as health care, education, secure communities and our natural environment. Only a strong economy provides the means to make record investments while maintaining a balanced budget. Your government remains committed to further reducing the income tax rate for small business to 5% in 2004 and 4% in the year 2005. I was very pleased that Premier Eves visited the town of Simcoe in my riding recently to make these announcements. Upon full implementation of these tax cuts, more than 125,000 businesses will benefit.

We believe that when Ontarians decide how best to spend their own money, we all benefit as a society, and the best way to ensure that they have money to spend is to not tax it away in the first place. Your government believes that tax cuts spur job creation, and the result is greater revenue and greater employment. While it has reduced taxes by \$16 billion, government revenue has increased by exactly that amount over the same time period.

I do wish to contrast that with some of the behaviour that we have seen from the leader of the Liberals opposite. Dalton McGuinty has confirmed that he's committed to delivering the largest tax hike in Ontario history: \$4.4 billion. McGuinty's \$4.4-billion tax hike would surpass both David Peterson and Bob Rae as hoisting the single largest tax hike in Ontario's history.

Just to go back in history—and I'm sometimes reluctant to—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Barrett:** I know that some of the members opposite are getting a little uncomfortable. I probably am touching a nerve. But I do wish to go back to that 10-year period before the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government came in. I will remind the members of this House



that during those 10 years, those 10 lost years, Ontarians faced the brunt of 65 new and increased taxes. During those 10 years, 1985 to 1995, we were truly hammered with 65 tax increases and new taxes, a total of—hold on to your seats, fellas—a total of \$7.5 billion in new or increased taxes since the Liberal-NDP accord of 1985.

From 1985 to 1994, personal income per capita increased by 54%. That's good news. However, the burden of provincial taxes per capita during that 10-year era of Liberal and NDP governance increased by 73%, more than eroding any pay increases that we may have received during those 10 years.

During that decade, freewheeling government spending, in combination with the relentless tax hikes I've just referred to and the failed job creation schemes some of us recall, in large part contributed to that fiscal crisis that we inherited in 1995.

1650

During that 10-year period, government spending almost doubled, from \$29 billion to \$54 billion. The deficit during that 10 years of Liberal-NDP rule grew from \$2.6 billion to \$10.1 billion, and during that 10-year period the debt almost tripled. Some people across the way would like to forget that. During that period, the debt approached \$100 billion, and it more than doubled under the NDP, from \$42 billion in 1990-91—again, almost \$100 billion in 1995.

Quite simply, what happened back then was that a lot of money was taken out of people's pockets, the economy slowed down and consumers, businesses and investors lost confidence. Once confidence was lost, the drag on the economy contributed to that 1990 recession. Rebuilding that market confidence at the time, and we knew this when we came in in 1995, depended on pumping money back into the economy by leaving money in the hands of taxpayers.

When the Liberals took office in 1985, the first thing they did, with the support of their NDP colleagues, was to begin a tax-and-spend rampage that saw Ontario taxpayers gouged with 32 new and increased taxes. Those were the Liberal taxes alone, 32 of them. Alcohol taxes and tobacco taxes were both increased by the Liberals. In 1988 the Liberals gained a majority government, they ended the NDP-Liberal coalition, and the new government's budget at that time imposed \$1.3 billion in new tax increases.

If this party were to come back, we can obviously predict what's going to happen to not only our pocket-books but to the economy of Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River):** I listened to my colleague on the government side very carefully, and I would say to myself that it seems he was sleeping at the time when many of the proposals and plans of the Liberals were put forward. I think he forgot really.

I want to tell you what my constituents have said about the things that I'm hearing now, how disappointed they are in this government. This government, which

itself has insufficient textbooks for the students—and some students are here today, and they can identify with that. Can you imagine, in one of the richest provinces and countries in the world, that we have insufficient textbooks in the classroom, and they brag about what they have done? It's disgraceful. It is said that five out of 10 were failing standardized tests, and they're bragging about that in this place.

In their throne speech, this government did not actually include the fact that they have added, in their eight years, \$21 billion to the debt. "This is a fiscally responsible government," they say, and they're talking about that \$21 billion on the backs of many of the people in my riding who haven't—

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** That's not including the Hydro debt.

**Mr Curling:** As my colleague said, we haven't even included the Hydro debt yet.

He stands there and talks about 10 lost years. In eight years, they've added \$22 billion to the debt—and the health care system had so many deep cuts—and then he stands here and talks about what great plans they've had in the eight years they've been here.

They have attacked the poor, they have attacked the people on welfare—who have paid their money—and then they talk about how proud they are. And they're looking for another mandate. Shame on you.

**Mr Martin:** I appreciate the opportunity for a couple of minutes to put some thoughts on the record following the member opposite's speech on the speech from the throne. He speaks, as was referenced by my good friend Mr Curling, about the 10 lost years, but he doesn't speak at all about the eight years of missed opportunity that this government has had. They've governed in some of the more prosperous times that North America has seen, and they didn't take advantage of that to pay down the debt. They chose instead to single-mindedly give tax breaks to the wealthy and those in the province who didn't really need them. By so doing, they missed an opportunity to actually pay down the debt of this province. Instead of paying down the debt, they drove it up. They missed an opportunity to invest in health care, they missed an opportunity to invest in education, they missed an opportunity to invest in community infrastructure that would have positioned us to take advantage of any new economic possibilities that are out there now to strengthen ourselves so that when there is a downturn in the economy, we can deal with it. Eight years of missed opportunity, eight years of slamming and hurting and attacking those things and people in our province that are most at risk and most vulnerable.

Cynically, in this speech from the throne, they said they were going to increase the pension for people living on ODSP. So we waited. Finally we had an announcement the other day that they were going to increase it by 5%, a paltry sum when you consider what these folks are already getting, living in poverty. There's no retroactivity and no tying it to the cost of living. They set these folks up for the expectation that in fact the government was



finally going to deliver, because we pressured them to, and then once again, disappointment—nothing but disappointment for eight years in this province.

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** It's a pleasure for me to make comments on the speech of my colleague for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. When he talks about being proud of the contents of the throne speech, I have to agree with him.

There's one issue I would like to dwell on, and I know my colleague brought it up; it deals with agriculture. He mentioned that agriculture is very important in his riding. I would agree with him that in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex agriculture is a very important issue to deal with. There's no doubt that we face many challenges in rural Ontario and certainly with the agricultural sector. When we talk about nutrient management, I think this government understands the challenges, especially for the small farmers who will be facing the implementation of the new regulations. Consequently, we will have to help them out financially in order to make sure that they protect the environment.

There's one issue that I would like to talk about that deals with the farming community. I know there's going to be an election between now and next spring, and I can't wait to debate with my Liberal colleagues across the way with regard to the agricultural policy framework. Why is it that, as the provincial Liberal Party, they support what the federal government is trying to do to the farming community in Ontario and across Canada by taking \$1 billion in support payments away from them? They're completely silent on this issue. Many of them represent agricultural and rural communities. I can't believe that they would support and condone what the federal government is trying to do to the farming community in Ontario and certainly across Canada.

My colleague for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant also mentioned that the content of the throne speech was formulated by the input of thousands and thousands of Ontarians. That is why we have a good throne speech, and that is why—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Comments and questions.

**Mr Caplan:** I'm very disappointed in some of the comments from my colleague for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. He's mistaken in many of the facts which he presented in his speech. Unfortunately, they were so numerous that it would be impossible to correct them all in the very short time that I have available.

The member failed to reference one part of the throne speech. I want to give him a chance to comment on it. I have some friends down in Simcoe county, and they were telling me that Mr Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, has assured the good folks down that way that the Nanticoke coal-fired plant will never be closed. He has been very vocal and very clear about that to the folks who live down there. Now, in the throne speech it says, "Providing additional generation is only half the solution. Ontarians have said they want affordable and practical energy conservation measures and cleaner

sources of power. Starting immediately, your government will phase out coal-fired generating stations no later than 2015."

1700

My question to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant is, given the fact that he has said to his constituents that this will never happen, how can he in good conscience vote in favour of a throne speech which says exactly the opposite? I hope the member will take the time to correct that contradiction. This is very true of the Eves government: they say one thing in one place, then they say something entirely different in another place in the province of Ontario.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Caplan:** I hear the members opposite. They're very wounded by that remark, but it seems very true. Ernie Eves has a penchant for changing his mind, for dithering and for tinkering. I really don't think the man has a backbone.

I want to hear from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant about this particular contradiction.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Barrett:** I want to recognize the Liberal members from Scarborough-Rouge River and Don Valley East. They did pick up on a discussion of those 10 lost years. I know the member from Don Valley East used the word "disappointment." If I were a Liberal, I would be disappointed if I were to go back into history.

There was an issue of questioning some of the facts. I would like to present, if you will, some additional facts.

When the Liberals were in power 10 or 15 years ago, some of us may recall that the retail sales tax was increased from 7% to 8%. They broadened its application, they jacked up gasoline taxes, they jacked up alcohol taxes and they increased tobacco taxes. In fiscal year 1989-90, we got another \$1.3-billion tax hike by the Liberal government. Economic development obviously suffered in those years, especially when you consider that the Liberals levied a payroll tax to draw another two billion business dollars out of the economy.

The NDP member opposite for Sault Ste Marie also recalled some of the issues in those 10 lost years. The NDP government introduced its first budget in 1991, and we all remember the statement: they told us they were going to spend their way out of the recession. To do this, that government drove the provincial deficit from \$3 billion to \$9.7 billion. That was a record year-over-year increase of 219%.

Again I put this to the members opposite: why on earth would the people in Ontario want to have these characters back at the helm?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**M. Lalonde:** Je vais partager mon temps avec mon collègue le député de Hamilton-Est.

C'est un plaisir de pouvoir participer au débat sur le discours du trône. Oui, encore une fois ce gouvernement va pouvoir dire, « Nous avons essayé de faire croire à tous les gens que nous avons consulté le public une autre



fois afin de présenter notre dernier discours du trône le 30 avril dernier. »

Oui, c'est vrai. On a voulu consulter le public. On a voulu consulter les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Mais lorsque nous regardons le temps qu'ils ont eu pour répondre à ces questionnaires qui étaient parvenus seulement dans nos bureaux de circonscription, nous avons dû faire paraître des articles dans les journaux demandant aux citoyens et citoyennes d'apporter les points qu'ils aimeraient voir ajouter dans le discours du trône. Le premier ministre, M. Eves, nous dit qu'au-delà de 10 000 personnes ont répondu à ces questionnaires. Mais toute personne dans cette province qui croirait que nous avons pris le temps de regarder ces 10 000 questionnaires, j'aimerais les voir travailler dans tous nos bureaux ici même à Queen's Park, parce qu'il est impossible de passer dans trois ou quatre jours les 10 000 formulaires que l'on nous dit nous avoir fait parvenir.

Donc, encore une fois c'est bien beau de dire, « Nous avons consulté le public », mais consulter le public, c'est du temps perdu, et aussi de l'argent qui est additionné lorsque nous avons fait parvenir ces formulaires au gouvernement, et aussi le coût de l'impression de ces formulaires, ce qui est certainement un montant énorme.

J'ai été désappointé de voir que très peu est mentionné sur le financement ou l'aide financière qui sera apportée aux municipalités. Récemment, 12 conseils de comtés unis se sont rencontrés dans l'est ontarien. Je vais lire ici ce qui est mentionné dans un article qui a paru dans le journal *Le Droit* le 15 mai dernier :

« Les municipalités de l'est de l'Ontario souffrent d'un manque d'argent. En fait, la crise financière est imminente si rien n'est fait.

« Le président des comtés de Prescott et Russell et maire de Casselman, Martial Levac, a fait état de la situation financière des comtés » unis « suite au dépôt du rapport "Directions futures".

« Commandé par les 12 comtés de l'est ontarien, ce rapport parle du besoin urgent pour une coordination stratégique des municipalités auprès » du gouvernement provincial.

« Les problèmes financiers des municipalités découlent, entre autres, du fait que la province a transféré une série de responsabilités au palier municipal. »

C'est bel et bien vrai. Aujourd'hui nous n'avons plus d'argent pour réparer nos routes. D'ici deux ans, les routes ne seront plus carrossables. Nous avons transféré la responsabilité d'au-delà de 21 millions de dollars aux municipalités dans les 12 comtés. Nous avons transféré la responsabilité des ambulances aux municipalités qui, auparavant, étaient payées à 100 % par les municipalités, et aujourd'hui nous savons tous que tous ces corps d'ambulanciers doivent procéder à une convention collective.

Actuellement, nous sommes à négocier pour les nouvelles conventions collectives et le gouvernement autorise seulement une augmentation de 6 %. Et puis, lorsque nous savons toujours que le gouvernement est bel et bien au courant que les conventions collectives qui ont

été signées ont encouru des dépenses additionnelles de 25 % à 30 %, donc, les municipalités seront prises encore à payer ces augmentations. Voilà pourquoi les municipalités ne voulaient pas prendre la responsabilité de ces corps qui sont très importants dans nos communautés.

Nous avons aussi transféré la pleine responsabilité du logement social. Nous savons tous qu'aujourd'hui un logement à 325 \$ par mois—c'est impensable qu'une personne puisse obtenir un logement pour 325 \$ par mois. Les personnes avec déficiences physiques actuellement ont le droit d'avoir un logement à 411 \$ par mois—introuvable dans la région de l'est ontarien aussi bien, encore bien moins dans la région de Toronto. Donc, le gouvernement, rien n'a été fait.

Mais je dois vous dire que lors du discours du trône, on a fait mention qu'ils viendront en aide aux gens qui ont une déficience physique. Mais dans le budget, zéro. Zéro paraît dans le budget pour cette aide. Est-ce que c'est encore un bluff qu'on a voulu faire pour attirer des votes additionnels comme la plate-forme électorale qui a été annoncée vendredi dernier? Il ne paraît même pas dans le budget et n'a même pas été mentionné dans le discours du trône.

Encore une fois nous jouons la politique, comme nous essayons de faire aujourd'hui avec le retour en classe. Nous savons que les trois partis—au moins dans le Parti libéral, dirigé par Dalton McGuinty, nous étions pleinement en faveur du retour en classe des 69 000 étudiants du conseil catholique des écoles de Toronto. Mais encore une fois le gouvernement a voulu jouer une politique sale. Je dis bien une « politique sale » parce que, après que nous avons bel et bien mentionné que nous étions pour apporter un amendement à la loi sur l'éducation, jamais cela n'a été mentionné. Nous sommes toujours intéressés au retour en classe de tous les enfants de la région de Toronto immédiatement, demain. Si le gouvernement aurait voulu coopérer, nous aurions dit au conseil scolaire, « Oui. Vous devez ouvrir vos portes immédiatement, demain, afin d'avoir le retour en classe de tous ces 69 000 étudiants qui sont sur la rue, ou actuellement les parents doivent demeurer à la maison pour les garder.

J'ai regardé dans le discours du trône ainsi que dans le budget, et très peu est mentionné pour les soins à domicile. Je dois dire qu'une bonne dame de St-Eugène, M<sup>me</sup> Brunet, qui actuellement a 88 ans, allait demander seulement deux heures de service à domicile par semaine—encore refusé. Nous n'avons pas les fonds nécessaires en place pour rendre le service à cette dame. Si cette dame décide d'aller demeurer dans une résidence de soins de longue durée ou dans une maison de retraite, cela va devenir très coûteux au gouvernement. Mais le gouvernement ne s'arrête pas pour dire dans le secteur rural, « Parfois nous avons des demandes qui diffèrent de celles du secteur urbain. » Je regarde mon ami le député de Lambton. Il est certainement au courant, parce qu'il a une grande région du secteur rural, que les besoins diffèrent de beaucoup du secteur urbain. Mais encore là, le gouvernement a omis de regarder l'importance.



1710

Récemment, je plaçais un appel au bureau de santé de la région de Cornwall concernant le Nil. Le Nil, ça va être une maladie, un virus qui va être même plus important que le SRAS. Mais actuellement, avons-nous un programme en place? Le gouvernement va annoncer des millions et des millions de dollars pour venir en aide et pour s'assurer que nous avons un produit nécessaire pour répondre aux besoins.

La réponse que j'ai eue le 28 avril dernier—j'avais reçu un appel qu'une personnes avait trouvé une corneille morte dans sa cour et j'ai placé l'appel. La réponse que j'ai eue : « Bien, notre programme n'est pas en place. On est rendu à la fin d'avril. Si vous avez trouvé une corneille, attendez le 5 mai et nous allons envoyer une personne pour la ramasser le 5 mai », six jours après. Un chat ou un chien aurait pu la prendre et puis l'amener dans une maison. Ensuite, nous avons continué nos recherches et nous avons finalement eu un appel du bureau de Cornwall nous disant les restrictions du collège de Guelph, où on doit faire parvenir ces oiseaux : pour les cinq comtés de l'est, seulement quatre oiseaux peuvent être envoyés au laboratoire par semaine—seulement quatre oiseaux. « Si vous en avez six, appelez votre municipalité. » J'ai pris la peine d'appeler toutes les municipalités et personne, personne n'était au courant du programme qu'il devait mettre en place.

Ce qui m'inquiète de plus en plus, avec tous les programmes ou les argents que nous venons dumper—c'est comme on me disait dernièrement. Le truck, le camion de Brinks s'en allait dans l'est ontarien. Il faisait la livraison d'argent. Je l'ai arrêté pour lui demander s'il n'avait pas de headlight. Tout d'un coup je me suis aperçu qui était au volant : nul autre que Ernie Eves. Il m'a dit, « Jean-Marc, nous sommes en difficulté, le Parti conservateur de l'Ontario. Je dois livrer l'argent le plus tôt possible. » J'ai dit, « Est-ce que je peux t'aider? » Il m'a dit, « Je dois avoir de l'aide. » J'ai pris le téléphone. J'ai appelé le camion-remorque : « Viens chercher Ernie Eves. Il n'est pas capable de livrer l'argent. Il est pris. Il est dans le trouble. »

Mais une chose qui m'inquiète beaucoup avec tout ce downloading, ce délestage, c'est le transport scolaire. Est-ce que ça va devenir la responsabilité telle qu'était l'intention en 1996? Le transport scolaire, deviendrait-il une responsabilité aux municipalités pour venir au bout de boucler le budget du gouvernement Ernie Eves?

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I'm certainly happy to join the debate on the throne speech. The first thought that came to mind when I looked at it was "underwhelming." It was clearly the throne speech of a government that has run out of ideas, that has run out of steam, the throne speech of a government that frankly is bankrupt intellectually, fiscally and morally across this province. It's a government that is desperately trying to cling to power.

It's clearly the government of a Premier who has no values or principles, a Premier who will shift his position every hour if he has to, if he thinks it's politically

expedient. Whether one agreed or disagreed with Mike Harris, one had a sense that Mike Harris really believed in the platform, really believed in what he wanted to do and where he wanted to take the PC Party. With Ernie Eves, if you don't like his position, just wait an hour and it'll change. He will listen to whatever the polls tell him to do. Look at the positions he has taken. Look at the throne speech. First of all, there was nothing in there at all in there that is any different from what has really been eight years of a government that is adrift. The only good things in that throne speech are ideas he stole from the Liberal platform. I'm glad he accepted our idea of public school choice. I'm glad he accepted our idea of a maximum waiting time for surgery. I'm glad he accepted our idea of more police on the street. But Ontarians are looking for real change. They're not looking for a Premier who has no principles, no values and doesn't really believe in what he stands for.

We're now at a point where I believe this government is out of its mandate. The four years are up, and I am happy to contrast our platform and the values and principles and commitment of Dalton McGuinty against Ernie Eves any day of the week. I can't wait for the Premier to muster up the courage to send Ontarians to the polls, because I think Ontarians have made up their minds that they're looking for real change, not fake change, not some pretend wannabe Liberal. Ernie Eves is now a Flaherty Conservative; a few months ago he was on the other side of the spectrum. Depending on whom you talk to, it seems as if in the last few weeks the right wing of the party has taken over again. I guess the moderates in the party have lost the fight about where to take the province of Ontario. The only real vehicle for change in Ontario is Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party. People want positive change, and we are going to be that agent of change here in Ontario.

Unlike the throne speech, our plan includes a strategy for jobs and economic growth. We have a commitment to a medicare act that will make two-tier, pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care illegal. We understand the Tories like that. We understand Tony Clement and the Premier like two-tier health care. They like a system where their friends can buy their way to the front of the line. We think that's wrong. We think that's not what this country and this province are all about. That will be a real contrast. Ontarians will get a chance to choose between a health care system that benefits the wealthy and powerful in Ontario and one that allows full access for Ontarians.

We're going to create 150 family health teams. We're going to increase medical school space by 15%. We're going to hire 8,000 new nurses and reopen 1,600 hospital beds. That is real, substantial change from what Ernie Eves is offering.

When it comes to education, rather than the cynical, cheap political stunt that was offered by the Tories today, we're going to bring some real change. We're going to put a cap on class size in the early grades of no more than



20. We're going to allow mentor learning till 18. We think 16 is too early to quit school.

I think what happened today with the bill about the Toronto Catholic school board showed most Ontarians what this government is all about. They're not interested in kids. They're not interested in getting the kids back in the classroom. What they're interested in is playing cheap political games at the expense of those kids. They could have brought in a simple, clean bill. If they were really, truly interested in sending those kids back to school, they could have brought in a very clean, simple bill that would simply have ended the lockout. Understand that it was not a strike. The board chose deliberately to lock out those teachers. A simple bill would have ended that, but instead they've stretched it.

This bill says that volunteer work by teachers is no longer volunteering. This bill says that teachers must now volunteer to do that work. It's absurd. It is absolutely absurd to say to a teacher—and an insult to most teachers who have spent years and years, hours every day, helping kids in extracurricular activities—that now they must do it. That's what this bill is all about.

This is a bill trying to implement the Tory election platform. I say to my colleagues across the floor that if you want to implement your platform, call an election and let's go to the people of Ontario and see if you can get that mandate. Don't do it through the back door. Don't try to exploit kids and the situation in Toronto, because it's simply cheap political games at the expense of those kids. That is wrong, immoral and unethical and not befitting the government of the province of Ontario.

Let me tell you, we believe in the collective bargaining process I thought Ernie Eves believed in it.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Agostino:** Don't take my word for it. You see, what Ernie Eves believes—let me quote the Parry Sound Beacon: "This isn't Alice in Wonderland. We don't live in a dictatorship. I'm adamant about not trampling on people's rights. There's no democracy if people can't strike." That's not me saying it; that's Ernie Eves saying it.

1720

**The Deputy Speaker:** We usually refer to members by their position or their riding.

**Mr Agostino:** The Premier is saying that.

The National Post in February 2002 said, "Mr Eves put the cost of binding arbitration, the only solution when strikes are outlawed, at \$700 million." I'm not interested in, or in favour of, taking \$700 million out of the classroom and putting it into teachers' salaries. That's what this is all about.

Ernie Eves, the Premier, has said again, "I think that it is time to bury the hatchet and talk to teachers to see what they want in the education system. You can legislate anything you want, but you can't legislate goodwill and respect. You have to earn that." That was the Premier, March 6, 2002.

The list goes on and on. The Minister of Finance: "Banning strikes doesn't necessarily get you where you

want to go. It's not a magic solution. You can still have disruptions."

This is not a case you have to make. You have made the case against your own legislation. You have made the case very clear. In January 2002 the government House leader said, "It's bad, it's awful." It goes on and on.

This is a government that has no principles, no values. You will do whatever it takes to desperately cling on to power in Ontario, and this is another perfect example of that. These are not my quotes. These are quotes of the Premier, these are the quotes of the Minister of Finance, these are the quotes of the government House leader, who railed away about how bad an idea it is to ban teachers' strikes in Ontario.

We believe you can have peace in the classroom by treating teachers with respect and dignity, by ensuring there's a fair collective bargaining process, by ensuring that school boards have sufficient funding to deal with all the needs they have. You can't force peace in the classroom. You can't force goodwill and respect. I agree with the Premier: you have to earn it. But this government certainly has not earned it.

When I look at the throne speech, it is clearly one that, if Ontarians are looking for a change in direction from this government, if Ontarians are looking for a government that is more than a one-trick pony, that believes all this is about is more tax cuts—as Liberals we're not opposed to tax cuts, but we believe there is a time and place for them, and we believe it's a question of priorities. We believe at this point in Ontario that the priority is to put more money into health care, more money into education, more money into clean water and clean air. Those are the priorities of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, unlike the government across the floor, which continues to think the only priority is to put money into the pockets of its rich, powerful friends.

Those are not the priorities of Ontarians, and I challenge this government. Your four years are up, you're out of ideas, you're out of steam, you're out of time. Do the right thing, do the honourable thing and go to the polls, call the election today and let the people of Ontario decide where they want the government to go and where we're going as a province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Ms Martel:** Something the member from Hamilton East said today surprised me—and I heard his leader say this when we had the throne speech, and there has been some other commentary as well—and that is the claim that the Conservatives stole Liberal ideas for the throne speech.

I hope the local Liberal candidate in my riding says just that in an all-candidates debate, because my response is going to be, "You're exactly right; there's no difference between the two. If you really want a change in vision, you've got to vote for New Democrats and for public power." So I hope every Liberal candidate in this campaign makes that statement. Dom, I don't know why you raised that again. I thought you guys would have figured that out and got off that trick by now. But that's

what I'm going to say if the Liberal candidate in Nickel Belt says it during the election campaign.

Let me get back to something more local, because of course all politics are local. I've got to go at this government again with respect to our Sudbury Regional Hospital. I was at an event two Saturdays ago; it was the opening of Dynamic Earth. The mayor of the city of Sudbury, Mr Gordon, who of course is a former Conservative member and a former Conservative cabinet minister, said to the crowd that was there, "This government is going to do something about this hospital." Maybe he knows something I don't; I hope he does. But the fact remains that I'm still waiting for the government to make an announcement about what is going to happen to the Sudbury Regional Hospital, because there has been no construction on phase 2 at that site for well over 12 months. The whole project is stalled. We have a huge cost overrun, and we have a government that's done nothing. We've had an operating review, a capital review, recommendations, a supervisor and more recommendations, and still no construction on this site.

I remind you that this site is supposed to be the teaching hospital for the new medical school, which, rumour has it, is also now going to have its start delayed for another year.

I say to the government: finish the hospital now. We need quality care in our community. Do the right thing. Put your money on the table and get the job done.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I'm pleased to comment on the speech by my friend from Hamilton East. I respect the member for Hamilton East. I often respect his views. I just think that sometimes he's in the wrong party. I think he cannot always agree with Dalton McGuinty. I know the head of the local of OECTA, the Catholic teachers' union, was out in the hall after Dalton McGuinty came in and patted himself on the back on all the work that—

**The Deputy Speaker:** You cannot refer to members by name.

**Hon Mr Baird:** OK. The Leader of the Opposition came patting himself on the back for practically bringing peace in our time by his efforts to intervene. The local OECTA head never talked to him and doesn't know what he's talking about out in the hallway. Dalton McGuinty had a bad day.

**Interjection:** He called the Chair names.

**Hon Mr Baird:** He called the Chair names. That's right. The education critic said, "Oh, he's a Tory hack." In fact, he's vice-president of a Liberal riding association.

The member opposite talked about Ernie Eves. What did Ernie Eves do when he was elected? He gave \$500 million more for education, and \$1 billion since that announcement. He offered 3%, which seems pretty fair to me. But that's not fair enough for the Liberals. They want huge increases. There's not enough money to solve their problems.

He's in favour of tax cuts, but he thinks we should put more money in health care. How about \$10 billion, I say to the member for Hamilton East? Is \$10 billion enough?

In fact, if you look at the platform of the last election, this government promised to spend more money on health care than his own leader promised. That is quite interesting.

The member opposite also spoke about allowing work-to-rule. Does he think that preparing report cards is some sort of a volunteer activity, and that it's just goodwill that teachers actually meet with students? That's part of the job.

We want to see these students back in the classroom. I am very disappointed in the honourable member that he wouldn't support the reasonable bill brought forward by the Premier today.

**M<sup>me</sup> Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier):** Je suis vraiment heureuse d'avoir l'occasion de m'exprimer sur certains points du discours du trône.

In the throne speech, it was said that "every child in Ontario deserves an excellent education and an equal opportunity for success in life, regardless of ... geographic location, ethnic background or religious belief."

This government prides itself on having taking seriously many recommendations of Dr Rozanski's report.

Toutefois, le gouvernement n'a encore rien fait pour donner suite à la recommandation 14 de ce rapport.

Recommendation 14 was asking this government to revise the funding formula to be able to look at the special needs of the francophone schools of the province. We don't have our fair share of the funding formula because our schools are smaller and our population is scattered everywhere.

Although his report recognized the lack of adequate funding for French schools, nothing was mentioned in the throne speech as to how he will address this issue and give the Franco-Ontarian schools the necessary resources so that they may respect the requirements of the different programs and offer the services they are entitled to.

Tout au long de la lecture du discours du trône, j'étais anxieuse de voir comment ce gouvernement allait respecter ses obligations constitutionnelles à l'endroit de sa communauté francophone.

You owe something to the francophone community, even if it is constitutional rights—another disappointment in recognition of the value of the francophone community from this government.

1730

**Mr Martin:** I too found it interesting that the Liberals are now claiming that their campaign promises reflect very clearly the Conservative campaign promises. In particular, I wanted to focus on this issue of school choice that both the Conservatives and the Liberals seem to be trumpeting as the be-all and the end-all for the improvement of schools and education for children across this province.

I don't understand that. I don't understand why they don't see that making sure every school in the province is a centre of excellence for each child who goes there for an education should not be a priority, why you wouldn't be willing to look at every school in every neighbourhood and every community across this province as an



opportunity to invest in the future of children and, in turn, the future of that community.

I don't know how you provide school choice, for example, to children in Gogama if you don't invest in the school that's in Gogama, Foleyet or Hornepayne. What choices do they have if you're not, as a government, willing to ensure and guarantee that every school, no matter where they exist in this province, whether it be in downtown Toronto in some of the poorer neighbourhoods or in places like Moosonee, Sault Ste Marie or Gogama—if you're not willing to commit to making sure those schools have everything they need, from libraries to principals to textbooks to opportunities for travel to other parts of the province to learn and to experience, then what is it you're saying? Are you saying that those who can either afford or have the luxury of having access to these new schools or centres of excellence that you will put money into because now you're giving students the opportunity to choose what school they will go to are somehow more important than the schools that children who don't have any choice will have to go to are more important? I don't understand that. I don't know where you're going with that. I don't know how that in any way is going to improve the opportunity for children in this province to get an education.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Hamilton East has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Agostino:** First of all, let me make it clear: I understand the NDP is opposed to more public school choice. I understand the NDP is opposed to maximum waiting time for surgery. I understand the NDP is opposed to hiring more nurses. I know that the NDP is opposed to hiring more police officers to keep the streets safe in Ontario. We understand that. That's a debate we're looking to have with our friends to the left during the campaign.

Let me tell you, here are the NDP and the Tories working together. It's nice to see it again. They're getting warmed up for the election campaign. I want to talk about the Tories' plan, because frankly these folks to my left are going to be irrelevant during the campaign.

Ernie Eves is offering you more tax cuts. He's offering you more corporate tax cuts. He's offering you mortgage eligibility, private school tax breaks, more money for health, education, environment, more nurses and more police officers. He's going to balance the budget and not raise your taxes. You know what? Most Ontarians are sophisticated enough and intelligent enough. They understand that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

This plan has now been costed out. They don't have a balanced budget today. It's not us saying it; it's the bond rating agencies who have said, "They were wrong when they said they've balanced the budget." We're talking a \$1-billion to a \$2-billion deficit. This is the government that increased the accumulated debt in Ontario by \$20 billion. There's only been one government that's been worse than that, and that's the NDP. The NDP had been \$45 billion in their five years in office. You're second to

the NDP in increasing the debt in Ontario. We understand that.

Ontarians, as I said earlier, are going to have a real choice. We've costed out our plan. We have a solid platform. It's a plan that is doable. It's a plan that's not going to raise taxes to the people of Ontario. We've released our platform. The government has released theirs. There's the four-year period. I say to the Premier and to the government members, let's get the game on the road. Let's get the show going. Let's call the election and let's give Ontarians a real choice as to where they want to take this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** I will attempt, in speaking to the speech from the throne, to try to tone down the rhetoric we've been hearing and hopefully bring a little more common sense back to the discussion.

I'm particularly proud to rise to speak about the speech from the throne read by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable James Bartleman. I was especially privileged to see the landau move up to the front steps. It was really nice to see a restoration of that particular tradition. In speaking about tradition and history, we really do need to analyze to a degree how far we have come since those dark and gloomy days between 1985 and 1995.

If you look at the number of jobs that have been created over the past eight years, we have probably created more jobs in eight years in this province than all of the rest of the provinces put together. I am really proud to say today that it was because we ended the practices of Liberal and NDP governments. We've actually stopped the raid of the taxpayers' pockets. They picked taxpayers' pockets; no question about it. In those 10 lost years we witnessed a veritable competition between the Liberals and the NDP. The race was very close as to who could raise taxes more often. Actually, the Liberals won that race. Liberals increased taxes 33 times, whereas, to the NDP's credit, they only increased them 32 times. I have to admit, that's not the kind of race that I would like to lay claim to winning. No, this competition between the Liberals and the NDP to slow down the economy by increasing taxes is not a game that we on this side of the House like to play.

The speech from the throne, called the Promise of Ontario, clearly outlines how different we are from our friends in the opposition—extremely different. I think it's important to highlight those today. What this speech from the throne suggests is it will provide an additional 17 tax cuts for seniors, for businesses and for hard-working wage-earners, many of whom live in my great riding of Scarborough Centre—you know, the great unwashed, the middle class, the ones who work hard, come home and all they're interested in doing is working hard to raise their families and put bread on the table for those families. Those 17 tax cuts include the proposal to allow senior citizens to deduct the education portion of their property taxes, regardless of whether they own or



whether they rent. They do that, of course, through filing their income tax at the end of April every year.

I need to tell you that this particular initiative in the throne speech is very popular with seniors in my riding of Scarborough Centre. I expect it would be pretty popular in Ontario ridings like Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Scarborough-Agincourt and I'm sure in Scarborough-Rouge River. I really don't think it's a huge request to my good friends on the opposition benches to urge them to change their opposition to this proposal that we know is going to assist seniors, especially those who are on fixed incomes. I'm not holding my breath, but I really do lay down that challenge to them today.

Something else that this Promise of Ontario contains is our government's plan to give seniors the choice of continuing to work after the age of 65. A lot of people don't know how old I am, but I'm getting close to 65. I know there are some in this House who are actually older than 65, including my good friend Mr Kwinter. I know Mr Kwinter is. He's a very wise man. I have huge respect for him. I know my friend Mrs Marland may not wish me to say this, but I think she may be pushing 65. I'm not quite sure.

1740

But really, it's not an issue in this place, because every one of us feels—and I have huge regard for every single member in this place, because I know that they are motivated by the desire to serve their constituents and their constituencies. First and foremost, that is their desire and their responsibility in this House, and that's why I have such huge respect for every single member in this House, notwithstanding that some may be a little younger than 65; some may be a little older than 65. I think what is important is that while it may not necessarily be the desire of all seniors to retire at age 65, I'm particularly pleased that this government has listened to the recommendations of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and given people the choice of deciding for themselves, just as, in my constituency of Scarborough Centre, the members of my particular party had the choice of deciding who they would nominate to run for the next election.

While the speech from the throne is sensitive to our citizens, it also demonstrates that this government has been listening to others in communities across Ontario. That is why our government plans to increase the Ontario disability support payments. I have to say that I held a series of consultations with my constituents in my riding as we went through this very extensive consultation process leading up to the throne speech, and I did hear a lot of requests for us to review the Ontario disability support payments. They were very happy. Most of my constituents are particularly happy with our welfare reforms, which we know have led to the creation of well over a million jobs in this province. We have always maintained that the best social program in this province is a good job, and that's what we've been creating, certainly since 1995.

We have actually introduced well over 200 tax cuts over eight years. I can tell you today that the Liberals

have voted against every single one of those tax cuts—every single one—and guess what? I bet you they'll be voting against the throne speech. They will be voting against that. I'm going to give them a challenge today. I'm going to give them the opportunity to actually help people with disabilities to lead happier and more productive and dignified lives by supporting the throne speech. I would hope you will do that when it comes time to vote.

This government's efforts to return our economy to a position of strength I believe have borne significant fruit. We know that lower taxes, which the Liberals don't agree with, have led directly to a boost in job creation. This means that more taxpayers are able to offset the government revenue that was returned, through tax cuts, to families across Ontario.

The facts are plain. As President John F. Kennedy in the United States discovered—John F. Kennedy. Can you remember that man? A good Democrat in the United States; President of the United States. He said in the early 1960s that tax cuts create jobs and boost government revenues. Well, guess what? We've proved him right. A good liberal Democrat in the United States of America. Oh, surprise, surprise.

We know that this is the Ontario experience. We cut taxes by \$16 billion, yet our revenues increased by \$16 billion. Should it come as any surprise? John F. Kennedy—I know he's probably a hero to many of my Liberal friends across the way—said that that's actually what happens. We created one million net new jobs that have created \$16 billion in revenues. Surprise, surprise.

I don't know about those people across there, but I know that my colleagues on this side of the House are proud of this accomplishment. It's a solid achievement. I worry that the combined policies of the two opposition parties would return us to those bad old days of high tax cuts—do you remember 65 tax cuts?—high unemployment—we lost 10,000 jobs; you have to admit, Peter, we lost 10,000 jobs—and high welfare rates. Yes, OK, everybody was being paid 10% higher than the average across the country, but did it create jobs? No, it contributed to huge job losses—and not only that, but an admission, certainly, coming from the former Premier, Mr Rae, that he was this close to declaring this province bankrupt.

There are many reasons not to turn the clock back to the tax-and-spend policies of past Liberal and NDP governments. Thanks to the growth in government revenue, we know that the product of the government's tax-cutting policies—the government is today spending more on quality health care than at any other time in our province's history. We've gone from \$17.4 billion to over \$28 billion that is being spent. What is it being spent on? Well, you know, I've said this more than once. When I was a councillor in Scarborough I happened to sit on our local hospital board for nine years, and for every one of those nine years, I begged, I pleaded with my local members—first the NDP, Mr Warner, for whom I had the greatest respect, and then the Liberal government. We



were begging and pleading for renal dialysis. Did we get renal dialysis? No. All we got were floors that were dark. The rooms were being kept warm, but they were actually laying off nurses. I can remember all of this: laying off nurses, keeping the rooms dark, but still keeping certain floors warm. Actually, the whole hospital was kept warm, but the hospital was half-empty. That was a pretty inefficient way of running a health care centre like the hospital in my riding.

Now what do we have? We have renal dialysis. Not only that, we also have a satellite renal dialysis. And guess what? That satellite renal dialysis is serving 400 additional patients in my riding of Scarborough Centre, and it's in a private building. It is run in a private building. It's not even run in the hospital. It's a satellite. Who pays for the medical services? The province of Ontario, through OHIP. Everybody has access. There is far more access. There are 800 patients in Scarborough who are receiving renal dialysis today who had to go to Oshawa and downtown because neither the NDP government nor the Liberal government put those services in the communities where they were needed. Shame on them.

I only wish, when we talk about education, that the Liberals across the floor were more effective at persuading their colleagues in Ottawa to fulfill the recommendations of—I'm sorry; we're continuing to talk about health care. I only wish that the Liberals across the floor were more effective in persuading their colleagues in Ottawa to fulfill the recommendations of the Romanow royal commission. We don't hear them say very much about that, do we? Instead, we still experience the malaise of chronic underfunding of the health care system by the federal Liberals. They continue to underfund the health care system, and I would just challenge my colleagues across the way, who probably are a little closer to the Liberals in Ottawa than we are, to challenge their federal cousins about the funding shortfall and what priority it is for the constituents in their own ridings.

Alvin, I see you actually nodding your head as if you agree with me. I'm sure you would join with me in continuing to urge the federal government to at least address the recommendations in the Romanow commission, if nothing else, and start giving us our fair share of health care funding in this province.

1750

There is actually more good news in the throne speech. The Eves government will launch an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program as well as breaking down barriers faced by nurse practitioners to expand their numbers and the range of services they're able to provide. The Eves government will also improve access to doctors by increasing the number of international medical graduates—

**Mr Curling:** What about those right here?

**Ms Mushinski:** —something that of course you know, Alvin, is very close to my heart. Furthermore, the government will provide free tuition for current and future medical school students who agree to practise in underserved areas, to join family health networks. A lot of

my colleagues who are from rural and remote areas in this province welcome that. I'm delighted that nearly \$6.5 million will be invested to support the electronic Child Health Network north and that the government will dedicate \$1 billion to the new Cancer Research Institute of Ontario.

Mr Speaker, my time is getting short. There's a whole bunch of stuff I would love to speak about, because there's so much good stuff contained in this document, stuff like creating more than 135,000 new post-secondary student places, the largest single capital investment in Ontario universities and colleges since the 1960s.

That's not all. We're also providing \$1.6 billion for special education in 2002-03. There's more good news, like the government providing tools and resources to ensure phonics are available to all schools and encouraging higher achievement in math by offering elementary school teachers scholarships to become math specialists. These are all good things that I believe will help kids like my own six-year-old, going on seven, grandson.

**Mr Beaubien:** She's a young grandmother.

**Ms Mushinski:** Yes, I'm a young grandmother.

His name is Cameron, and he's got a great teacher, by the way.

Any fair-minded observer of the economic growth of our province and the resulting record investments in health and education would have to concede that we are providing good government to the people of this province. Despite the tough economic times when we came into office, we resisted taking the easy route that was taken by the Liberals in Ottawa of slashing health and education funding.

As the throne speech makes clear, there is more work to be done in providing good government for the people of the province, and there continues to be good stuff in here that will provide that good government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Scarborough-Rouge river, if there are two of us standing, one of us is out of order, and it's not me.

Pursuant to standing order 41(a), six sessional days have been allotted to the reply to the throne speech.

On May 1, 2003, Mr Dunlop moved, seconded by Mr Gill, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

On Tuesday, May 14, 2003, Mr McGuinty moved, "That the address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of this session be amended by striking out all the words after, 'We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario,' and substitute the following:

"Whereas Ontarians want a real and positive change;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will fix the vital public services that we all need while keeping the budget in balance and holding the line on taxes;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will cancel the \$3.2-billion tax giveaway to large corporations and put that money toward improved health care, with more doctors and nurses and shorter waiting lists;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will cancel the private school tax credit and put that money back into improving our public schools through smaller class sizes;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will end taxpayer-funded self-serving partisan advertising and put that money toward improving our water quality monitoring system and improving our air by closing coal-fired plants and mandating cleaner gasoline;

"Whereas the speech from the throne proved that the Eves government has been dithering, continues to support two-tier health care, private school tax credits, giveaways to large corporations, taxpayer-funded self-serving advertising and compromised environmental protection;

"Therefore, this House profoundly regrets that nothing has changed. The Eves government is tired, cynical, out of touch, out of steam and out of ideas, and instead of providing the real and positive change Ontarians demand, are only looking out for themselves and their friends."

On Wednesday, May 7, 2003, Mr Hampton moved, "That the amendment to the motion be amended by striking out all the words after, 'Whereas Ontarians' and substitute the following:

"have felt the impact of bad Conservative privatization policies where it hurts—in the pocketbook;

"Whereas the Conservatives ignore evidence from around the world that privatization of public necessities—such as water, hydro, health, education—doesn't work and costs more;

"Whereas Ontarians are looking for practical solutions that would:

"Stop hydro privatization and deregulation and ensure clean, reliable public power at cost.

"Extend public home care, create 100 new community health centres and cut long-term-care user fees. Cancel plans for private MRI/CT clinics and privately built hospitals and put funds back into public health care."

"Keep our drinking water"—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Excuse me.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, I will not excuse you. I don't want to be interrupted. I will not warn the member for Sault Ste Marie again.

"Keep our drinking water public and protect water from source to tap.

"Ensure every student has the opportunity to excel, guaranteed by a dedicated education excellence fund that takes the politics out of education funding. No public funds for private schools.

"Immediately increase the minimum wage to \$8 an hour, prohibit scabs and treat injured workers fairly."

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I'll not warn the member for Scarborough Centre again.

"Freeze rents for two years, build at least 32,000 units of affordable housing and increase shelter allowances.

"Cut tuition by 10% and ensure that no student is denied a quality education or training for financial reasons.

"Lower transit fares, shorten waits and reduce gridlock with a dedicated transportation trust fund.

"Reduce child care fees to \$10 a day for 18-month-olds to five-year-olds in non-profit, regulated child care and create 20,000 new child care spaces.

"Protect your pension from inflation and let you take it with you from job to job.

"Therefore, this House endorses an agenda of public power."

The first question to be decided is Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment to the amendment carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the Honourable Doug Galt, MPP, chief government whip, writes: "I would like to request that the vote on government order number 1 be deferred until May 22, 2003."

Thank you for assistance in this matter. So be it.

It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 tonight.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*



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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

## Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 21 May 2003

Mercredi 21 mai 2003

Speaker  
Honourable Gary CarrPrésident  
L'honorable Gary CarrClerk  
Claude L. DesRosiersGreffier  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 May 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 mai 2003

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### 2003 ONTARIO BUDGET

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by Mr Eves, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Mrs Ecker moves government notice of motion number 1, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, filed on April 30, 2003, seconded by Mr Klees.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Mr Eves.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm sorry. Seconded by Mr Eves.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I suspect Mr Klees would have been as happy to second this motion as Mr Eves.

I'll be splitting my time with the members from Simcoe North and Kitchener Centre, who also have some very important things to say tonight.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak about our government's fifth consecutive balanced budget and to talk a little bit about the plan that is behind it.

First of all, balancing budgets is about keeping our government's promise of growth and prosperity for this great province of Ontario. In making the right choices, we are securing our economic future and therefore the future of our children and our grandchildren.

Unlike previous governments, unlike our predecessors, what we've chosen to do is not carve up a shrinking economic pie into ever smaller pieces. Instead, we have chosen to make the economic pie bigger through the choices we've made: choices that are building blocks of our economic plan, choices that include doing things to ensure our economy works, our job growth remains strong and the province remains resilient.

Because of the choices, the economic plan we've put in place since 1995 is working. We can see it in the fifth balanced budget in a row, a feat not seen since 1908. We've paid down \$5 billion in debt, which has created significant savings for taxpayers in less debt interest, something no other government in history has been able to accomplish. We've built an economy that has created more than one million new jobs, and that economy is outperforming the rest of Canada and other leading industrial nations in economic growth.

The importance of having the right fundamentals in place can certainly be seen with what has happened recently in Ontario with the outbreak of SARS—successfully contained, I might add. Because of that, we've actually seen the first job loss in Ontario in the past 18 months. It certainly shows the far-reaching impact that SARS had, not only on people's personal lives, but also on many businesses here, especially in Toronto and the GTA.

But you can see the strength of our economy and the strength of our communities in how the people and businesses of this province have rallied together in an incredible effort to rebound from SARS, to rebound from the impact we've had, and our government's actions led by Premier Eves have certainly been part of that.

We announced a comprehensive set of measures to promote travel to Ontario, including a sales tax holiday on tourist accommodations and attractions, money for marketing and promotion, and compensation to those whose lives have been affected by the SARS outbreak. We did this to meet the different needs posed by this outbreak and also to tell the world—to make sure the world knows—that Ontario, Toronto and the GTA are not only open for business but also great places to come and visit and enjoy.

**Interjection:** They don't think it's a good place to visit.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I know. The Liberals over there don't agree.

The reason we are coming back from that is because we've had an economic plan of great fundamentals in place. We saw how it helped Ontario to rebound after the events of 9/11, and it will indeed help support our communities to rebound as a result of SARS.

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A strong economy quite simply means a strong Ontario. Over the past year, because of the building blocks that have been put in place by our government, we've not only sustained growth, but our economy has rebounded faster and stronger than our G7 partners. The plan is working. We believe it's essential, and we believe we need to continue to move forward with the important components of that plan. One of the most important, of course, is tax relief for individuals and businesses in this province, but also part of the plan is balanced budgets, competitive tax rates, paying down debt and setting key priorities for investing taxpayers' money in the priority programs they support.

One of the things that have helped spur economic growth in Ontario has been healthy consumer spending, supported very much by reduced taxes and low interest rates. Rising employment and higher after-tax income are expected to help sustain that consumer spending in the future. From the second quarter of 1996, when Ontario income tax cuts began, real disposable income increased by over 22%. That was stronger than the 18% pace for the rest of Canada.

During that same period, Ontario real consumption increased by over 28%, ahead of the 22% recorded in the rest of Canada. The healthy financial position of Ontario families will help underpin the sustained growth in consumer spending and future economic growth. Thanks to tax cuts and a growing economy, average family incomes have been rising dramatically in Ontario. Between 1995 and 2000, real average after-tax income of two-parent Ontario families with children rose by 19%. Over the same period, single-parent families saw a 33% increase in their real average after-tax income. So tax cuts have worked, not only for the economy and job growth, but also in helping to increase family incomes, a very important step for any government to take.

The market conditions needed to support stronger business investment are in place, and we need to continue to do that. Within a supportive economic environment, businesses of all sizes across a wide range of industries have contributed significantly to strong job growth in the province since 1995. Our tax reduction program will continue to support business, whether small, medium or large, because we understand that building a business environment that supports investment, job growth and prosperity requires strategic sector investments, support for innovation, strong capital markets and aggressive skills development, all part of the plan we have been taking. We can do that, because on this side of the House we understand the importance of supporting that investment, of supporting that job growth and prosperity, of making strategic sector investments, supporting through innovation, strong capital markets and aggressive skills development.

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean):** Repeat that.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I agree with my colleague: it needs to be repeated because it is something that previous governments forgot to do, and we all paid the price. That's why the 2003 budget proposes significant new measures that will help give our growing firms improved access to venture capital, as well as the tax cuts I was mentioning.

For example, we're proposing changes to the labour-sponsored investment funds program. This program has been an important source of venture capital for small and medium-sized businesses, having invested \$350 million in Ontario businesses last year. So the changes that we will be proposing in the budget legislation would provide further support for companies that are having difficulty raising venture capital by giving the funds greater flexibility in the investments that they can make. The

proposed changes would allow investments in listed companies on stock exchanges to go up to 25% of its investments in a year, up from 15%. Also, the definition of a small business would be increased to include businesses with \$6 million in assets. We will be working with the federal government to increase the allowable maximum investment in a company.

We're also proposing changes to the community small business investment funds program to bring new sources of capital for commercializing university and hospital research by proposing to extend the deadline for registration of this type of fund from the end of this year to the end of next year to allow further expansion.

**Mr Guzzo:** The Liberals are against it.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I suspect they probably are.

We're also proposing another step which I think is going to be very important to attract and keep investment here, and that is to reduce capital tax rates in Ontario.

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Job killer.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes. The capital tax has sort of stuck up like a sore thumb, if I may use that phrase, when many companies around the world have been looking to invest here in Ontario. So starting on January 1, 2004, there will be a 10% reduction on that tax, and we intend to eliminate the capital tax by the time the federal government eliminates its capital tax.

So coupled with our previous reductions for our small business, our medium business and our corporate income tax rates, and coupled with our personal income tax cuts that we've made for people in low-income circumstances, all the way through, all taxpayers have received breaks because of the tax relief that we've provided. That has been important in supporting the economic growth that we've seen in Ontario.

But it's not simply tax cuts, tax relief and a competitive tax system, an important goal that we've been working very hard to achieve and we're seeing the success. There is more that we must speak to in an economic plan for this province.

When I travelled across the province doing extensive pre-budget consultations in over 17 communities, I talked to over 1,300 individuals. We certainly heard about the two most important priority programs for people: health care and education. The budget certainly responds to that. On this side of the House we recognize that having a universally accessible health care system that is available to Ontarians when and where they need it is central not only to our quality of life but also to our economic quality of life. The health care system that we have in Ontario is a key reason why people choose to live, work, invest and raise a family here. We need to help support that.

Our government's record on health care investment shows that we are willing to walk the talk on health care. We've increased spending every year. In 2003-04, we'll invest a total of \$28 billion in our health care system, investments that have made a real difference in the lives of Ontarians. That's the most that has been spent on our



health care system. These investments are going to make important improvements, for example, advancing primary care reform. We're increasing the supply of medical professionals and other health care professionals. We're expanding the number of nurse practitioners for rural and underserved areas—very, very important. We're reimbursing tuition for nurse and nurse practitioner students willing to practise in underserved areas after graduation. It's something that we've been doing to encourage more physicians, and we're doing it for nurses and nurse practitioners.

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We are completing the first new medical school in 30 years that we've seen in this province, in northern Ontario, with campuses at Lakehead in Thunder Bay and Laurentian in Sudbury. We're increasing the number of foreign-trained doctors certified to practise in Ontario—another important step to make sure that those who come here with medical skills will be able to contribute as they want to in our communities. I think this is an extremely important step.

Hospitals are part of that as well, and we've increased our commitment to hospitals again in this budget. We're providing \$10.3 billion to support our hospitals, and by 2005-06, multi-year funding will provide the hospital sector with an increase of approximately 16% of the level of support that they received prior to the third-party review of hospital finances in 2002-03.

I think that's important to stress. One of the things that we've heard from our funding partners was the need for multi-year funding, the need to be able to plan ahead and be more accountable, and they need those funding commitments to do that.

As part of the proposed multi-year-based funding framework that the budget announces, we're making it a requirement that all hospitals demonstrate that improvements in funding can translate into improvements in services. So we are working with the sector to provide stronger accountability standards so taxpayers and patients will know that those increased investments are indeed making the difference they should.

Performance measures will be developed with this as well. Also, we're working to improve how health capital dollars are being spent, another important investment. In the last two years, we've doubled health capital spending in Ontario so that virtually every hospital is being rebuilt, expanded or replaced, because we need to finish the hospital restructuring job we started to keep the system strong.

The budget also announced other investments in health care that are specifically focused on our seniors: for example, the strategy on osteoporosis, a condition that afflicts far too many of our seniors; more resources for cataract surgery, something that can make a big difference in the quality of life of our seniors; more nursing care in our long-term-care facilities and more long-term-care facilities themselves—important investments to support our seniors.

The budget has also announced an historic commitment to cancer research in Ontario. Experts have told us that for certain types of cancer we can, with a focused effort, actually find better prevention and cures. So we're investing \$1 billion over the next decade to establish a new cancer research institute to build on Ontario's strength in cancer research, so Ontarians can rest assured that our government will continue to fund what Ontarians believe to be the top priority for programs. We will continue to support that and continue to advocate, on behalf of our citizens, taxpayers, patients and health care professionals, to Ottawa, and continue to urge them to ante up with their fair share on health care for Ontario. So we will continue to do that.

But we also can't neglect the other important priority, the second priority that is mentioned by Ontario families when they talk about what they want the government to address. First is health care, but second—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Energy.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —is education.

If the energy minister wants me to mention energy, I will do that for him. But families tell me that the second most important program is education, while energy is very important. I'm getting to that later in the speech, actually.

Education is a major priority for us—for the people of Ontario and for this government. We need to continue to invest in our public education system. I believe it's one of the most important things that a government can do: make sure we have a strong public education system so that our young people get the tools and the support that they need to succeed. Not only is that good for our young people individually, but for our quality of life—to have strong, contributing citizens in our society. It's also good for our economic growth. So, since 1995, we have been working to improve our public education system to put in place a plan that would improve student learning and achievement.

We know that that plan is working: a more rigorous curriculum, standardized testing, standards for professional development and assessment of teachers; literacy tests, early reading programs—important standards and steps that we're actually seeing signs on national and international tests that our students are learning better. We know that is important.

Investments are important and so are the improvements in the plans and standards that we have been setting for the public education system in not only K to 12, but we can't ignore our post-secondary system as well. For example, the budget took another step to expand our post-secondary system to create over 20,000 additional new college and university spaces for students—

**Hon Mr Baird:** Hear, hear. Even the OFS cheered. The Canadian Federation of Students cheered.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** —so that young taxpayers like Michael Fogarty will have a spot in post-secondary institutions so that he can succeed as well. I hope that in one of those spots he will be able to participate—

**Hon Mr Baird:** What's his name?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Michael Fogarty. There you go. Actually we could mention everyone's relatives, if you like, and staff tonight.

It's important because it's a commitment we made to Ontario families that every willing and qualified young person who wished to have a spot in a college or university could indeed do so. We've created over 135,000 new spaces and new quality assurance funds to help put the supports around those spaces.

On education: from K to 12, as I mentioned, we've increased funding from \$12.9 billion to—this coming school year it'll be \$15.3 billion; by 2005-06 it will reach \$16 billion. That's a 14% increase, almost \$2 billion in investments in our schools that are extremely important and that will help the government finalize the implementation of the Rozanski report.

Investments in K to 12 and post-secondary are important, but many of our young people find great career opportunities as well in apprenticeship in trades and other avenues. That's why the budget also speaks to a new apprenticeship tax credit to improve employers' ability to train and attract apprentices.

We're also investing \$90 million in our high schools over the next four years to renew technological equipment, train teachers and develop partnerships with employers and colleges.

While we have increased investments in our public education system to historic levels, we also recognize on this side of the House that supporting parental choice—respecting when parents make choices about their children's education that might better reflect that family's religious or cultural beliefs, for example, or better meet the unique needs of their young person, their child, and so we are moving forward to speed up the equity in education tax credit to support that parental choice.

Health care, education—very important priorities, but there are others as well that this budget spoke to because Ontario's families, our taxpayers know that we need to support programs that help us have a clean and safe environment, for example, because we want to have communities where people want to live and where it's safe for people to live, where the environment is clean.

One of the important priorities has to do with safe, clean drinking water. This government has been moving forward to put in place the toughest policies in the world to attain that goal. We're implementing the recommendations made by Justice O'Connor by strengthening our laws, doubling the number of inspectors and protecting groundwater. We're expanding our commitment to invest in safe drinking water to \$750 million over three years. This funding is going to help assist municipalities, for example, meet tough new drinking water quality standards, \$200 million to do that; \$31 million for provincial park compliance; \$41 million to support safe drinking water legislation and compliance; money for research and development for the Clean Water Legacy Trust and the Clean Water Centre of Excellence—important steps to make sure that every time our families turn on the tap, they can rest assured that they will be safe.

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One of the other building blocks of good economic growth in this province is of course to continue to have a sustainable, affordable energy system here in Ontario. This budget proposes incentives for using innovative technologies and renewable forms of energy. To encourage the production of clean, renewable energy in Ontario, we're proposing to expand the five-year retail sales tax rebate for solar energy systems which we announced in November 2002. The budget proposes to expand that to include wind energy systems, micro-hydroelectric systems, geothermal heating and cooling systems for residential premises—very, very important. The Minister of Energy has been very, very vigorous in pushing for these steps. The rebate would be available for purchases made after March 27 this year and before November 26, 2007.

Safe, reliable and affordable power is also key to Ontario's economic future. As you may recall, last fall our Premier introduced a comprehensive action plan to help lower electricity bills, protect consumers, encourage conservation and alternative energy, and support a new supply.

This year's budget builds on that action plan and takes some additional steps. For example, we will be working with the private sector on the Portlands Energy Centre Project and the Niagara Tunnel Project, two important steps to increase our supply of clean generation.

We're proposing an additional 100% corporate income tax deduction for companies making new investments in generating electricity for their own use from alternative or renewable energy sources.

With the assistance of the private sector, we're also proposing to develop all of the remaining economic hydroelectric power within Ontario. That will be another important step to make sure that we have a strong supply.

We're proposing to contribute \$20 million over five years to establish a new centre of excellence for electricity and alternative energy technology, another important step in achieving our goal. The centre will be responsible for coordinating applied research and commercialization projects for more efficient and environmentally friendly energy technologies.

Our budget makes a continued commitment to strong communities, a strong economy, strong public education, strong health care and a good energy system. All of those are part of that, but there are some other steps that need to be taken as well.

We're demonstrating this with multi-year funding commitments for our municipalities, and also for an expansion of transit services. We're increasing the funding for municipalities to support them by 18% by 2005-06.

We're also, with funding announced in this budget, going to help fund a new GTA bus rapid transit system so that commuters will be able to travel quickly and reliably across the top of Toronto, from Halton to Durham. For those of us who represent 905 communities, we know



how important bus transit and GO Transit are to those communities.

We're also introducing new initiatives to help our municipalities respond to their infrastructure challenges through the municipal financing authority, which will help municipalities with low interest loans for the financing of transportation, for example, and water infrastructure.

To support that investment in our municipalities, we also began an innovative new opportunity for Ontario investors of tax-free Ontario Opportunity Bonds. I must say, when we started those bonds earlier this spring, we anticipated we might attract perhaps \$50 million of investment. We are well over \$100 million. It's a great investment opportunity.

Our transportation corridors move goods and services across the province each and every day. We're committed to improving those highways and those services by working in partnership with the federal government and our municipalities. As I mentioned, transit investment is a very important priority. This budget moves forward with \$1.25 billion for inter-regional transit expansion in the Golden Horseshoe region, \$1 billion for GO Transit-based capital needs, \$750 million for the municipal transit renewal program and \$250 million for the strategic expansion projects in urban areas outside the Golden Horseshoe region.

Through SuperBuild, we're also continuing to invest in our highways, to keep our highway system strong—again, an important support for economic growth. We're investing another \$1 billion in highways this year as part of our 10-year, \$10-billion commitment.

In the pre-budget consultations, one of the things that people mentioned was their families and taking steps to make sure their families can remain strong and be prosperous. Of course, one of the initiatives this budget speaks to, to deal with that, is to help our seniors have a more secure and safe retirement. One of the highlights in the budget is the proposal of a new tax credit to help those seniors, to recognize the contributions they have made to our prosperity and our quality of life.

To help support seniors and their families, in the budget we are proposing a \$450-million-a-year benefit for our seniors in additional property tax relief for seniors who own or rent their home. This would result in an average net saving of approximately \$475 annually to 945,000 senior households. We're also proposing increased tax support to about 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities. This would result in an average tax saving of about \$300 per person, another important step to help our families. Together with the personal income tax age credit, additional support for seniors through property and sales tax credits, the benefits from the provincial personal income tax cuts, which many seniors benefit from as well, the new initiative in this budget—all these things combined—would mean \$2.5 billion in tax savings per year for our seniors. Some important supports in this budget also for

families—we have improved the child care benefit for working families as well—important steps.

In closing, there's one other initiative included in this legislation that I would like to mention, and we took this step last year in budget legislation: to protect investor confidence and the integrity of our capital markets. We know that is another important component of strong economic growth. In the budget legislation, we are proposing broader rights for secondary market investors to sue, to provide a strong deterrent to poor disclosure practices to help our investors and protect them. This budget moves forward with additional changes to make that happen. In the legislation we did last fall on investor protection, coupled with what will be happening this spring, should this legislation pass, these measures will make Ontario's regulatory system for investor protection the toughest in Canada, increasing fines, giving the Ontario Securities Commission the ability to order that offenders give up their ill-gotten gains if they are in violation and to increase court fines and prison terms—very, very important steps.

By choosing to focus on the right priorities, by having an economic plan in place that has the right fundamentals, we've been able to help build a strong economic foundation that can encourage growth and prosperity for all Ontarians. Our tax and fiscal policies undertaken since 1995 have focused on creating the conditions to increase growth and raise living standards on a sustained, long-term basis. This year's budget builds on our economic plan because we know that it is working, and this plan will continue. We will continue with the building blocks that are key to a strong and resilient economy: competitive tax rates, lower taxes, balanced budgets, prudent fiscal management, cutting waste and the strategic investment of public dollars in key priorities like health care, education and the environment. We believe this plan will continue to support a very strong and successful future for this great province, which is one of the reasons that members on this side of the House not only stood for election in 1995 with Premier Harris, again with Premier Harris in 1999 and that we are very prepared to stand again with Premier Eves to carry on our economic plan.

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**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** It's my pleasure this evening to rise to take part in the debate and the opening statements on The Right Choices.

I'd like to begin by thanking Minister Ecker for her comments and congratulating her for announcing her second balanced budget. I had the honour to work as her parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Education for about 18 months, and I understand exactly the kind of work Minister Ecker puts into any ministry she represents. Certainly I know the thought she put into this particular budget bill.

As you know, this important piece of legislation would enact the measures announced in the 2003 Ontario budget. As the minister said, it is our fifth consecutive balanced budget. I'm proud, as a member of this

government, that each and every year I've been here we've been able to deliver a balanced budget. I'm very proud of that. I'm also honoured to be a member of the government that tabled this document. With this budget, I'd like to remind the members that our government will have paid down this year \$5 billion in debt.

Because of our track record and the economic growth that has resulted from our policies, we are also able to invest in what matters most to Ontarians: health care and education. I'd like to take a moment to say a few things about health care, particularly to relate a project in my riding, and that's the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

As a member of the county of Simcoe council in 1983, my first year as a county councillor, I had the opportunity to sit on the hospital services committee. At that time the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital was looking at a redevelopment or expansion plan. Over the years, through different governments and different boards of directors, we finally got to the stage where we tackled this in 1999 with a great deal of effort.

I want to thank a few people along the way. One is Minister Ecker, who originally announced a provincial contribution of \$17 million toward this project. In the last three years, with inflation, the cost of building products and some changes to the plans, this project has actually risen to a total of around \$65 million to \$70 million. I was very pleased and very thankful to Minister Ecker and Minister Clement for allowing me to announce, about two weeks ago, a provincial contribution of \$40.5 million toward this project. I'm very proud of this, because it's something I've been working on, on and off, for basically 20 years. I believe—and I can say this to the minister—that if we look back in time over the last three years, the way this project has developed should be a model for all hospital expansions within our province. Because of the communities that got behind this project—the foundation, the auxiliary, the board of directors—we're very pleased that in our community alone the foundation has raised \$12 million in the last 18 months toward this expansion project.

When we are dealing with our other important priority, education, I would like to thank Minister Witmer for allowing four schools to be on the list of 34 that should be replaced in the province. That was announced about four weeks ago, and I happen to have two of those in my riding: Mount Slaven public school in Orillia and Parkview public school in the town of Midland.

If passed, this bill would ensure that Ontario remains the best place in which to live, work, invest and raise a family. As an Ontarian, I am pleased by the measures the budget contains, because they would ensure that this province remains on the right track for growth and prosperity for many years to come. Our government's plan to restore growth, job creation and prosperity to Ontario is in fact working. Lower taxes, balanced budgets, reduced debt and prudent fiscal management have created more than one million net new jobs since 1995 and are making our economy one of the most competitive on the globe.

When my honourable colleague Janet Ecker, the Minister of Finance, met with hundreds of Ontarians across the province in her pre-budget consultations, she received advice that was very helpful in developing the next steps in our plans. I'd like to again thank Minister Ecker for visiting Simcoe county in her consultation process. I know we had about 100 people out to an event in Orillia. She received invaluable input toward the budget that she delivered a little later on.

It was clear that health care and education continue to be the top priorities of Ontarians. There were no surprises there, either. That, of course, is what I mentioned earlier in the announcements we've made to date in my riding. I'm very pleased, of course, that they are the two top priorities in our riding.

We also heard that continued tax relief is vitally important, not just because it rewards individual initiatives by leaving more money in their pockets to spend, save or invest, but because they recognize that lower taxes attract and, in fact, keep jobs right here in the province of Ontario.

I would say that with today's amendments, we would continue to support the people of this province with good, effective tax relief. Indeed, the Right Choices Act, 2003, proposes a number of amendments to various statutes that are designed to cut taxes and sustain economic growth in our province.

As my honourable colleague has mentioned, the bill proposes to cut individual taxes and extend tax relief to persons with disabilities and to their caregivers. It proposes to reduce taxes for persons with low and moderate incomes and provide further child care assistance for low- and moderate-income families with young children.

The bill also proposes amendments to increase investment in alternative and renewable sources of energy.

As well, the bill proposes other amendments to the following acts: the Assessment Act; the Commodity Futures Act; the Electricity Act, 1998; the Limitations Act, 2002; the Municipal Act, 2001; and the Securities Act. In addition, the bill proposes a new statute called the Total Beneficiaries Liability Act, 2003.

Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses will benefit, as well, with the amendments in today's bill. For example, the bill proposes to cut taxes for corporations in Ontario and encourage investment, particularly investment in small and medium-sized businesses.

Allow me to talk about the specifics of how we plan to do this. The proposed amendments to the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act are intended to improve access to capital for small and medium-sized businesses in this province. Labour-sponsored investment funds, which are a significant source of venture capital for small and medium-sized businesses, would be given greater flexibility in the investments they can make. The funds would be permitted to increase their investments in listed companies.



In addition, these proposed amendments would facilitate the establishment of additional community small business investment funds in Ontario. These very important funds have become a key source of capital for universities and hospitals that are commercializing research. The amendments would increase the maximum asset size of an eligible business for the purposes of the small business investment requirement from \$5 million to \$6 million. A further amendment extends the deadline for investing in a community small business investment fund from December 31, 2003, to December 31, 2004.

The Business Corporations Act authorizes the director to dissolve a corporation that is in default of its obligations under the Corporations Tax Act. This bill proposes an amendment that will give us increased powers to dissolve a corporation that is in default of its obligations under other specified tax statutes. We believe we need to clamp down on these corporations that do not comply with the law.

Tax rates in Ontario remain competitive in order to promote consumer spending and to attract new businesses and new investment to our province. To that end, we're proposing a number of amendments to the Income Tax Act that would contribute to continued economic growth in the province. For example, amendments to the act would increase the threshold at which Ontario taxpayers are required to pay the provincial surtax. Effective January 1, 2004, the surtax will become payable when Ontario income tax exceeds \$4,727 as adjusted for inflation. The threshold is proposed to increase to \$5,240 as of January 1, 2005.

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Our government believes that we need to help support individuals with disabilities and people who care for infirm or disabled family members. Our tax system currently provides assistance to these people through a number of non-refundable tax credits, including the disability credit, caregiver credit and infirm dependant credit. However, the care provided by individuals for an infirm spouse or common-law partner goes unrecognized by the current tax system, as do the efforts of adult children to help their infirm parents or grandparents with modest incomes remain in their own homes.

We are proposing three enhancements to these credits, effective January 1 this year. First, the amounts on which these tax credits are based would be increased to \$6,637. Second, we propose to extend the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit to include spouses or common-law partners who are dependent by reason of a mental or physical infirmity, and to provide support to more caregivers living apart from infirm dependent relatives. Third, we propose to raise the level of the dependant's income above which these credits would be reduced or eliminated. This means more people would qualify.

We are also proposing to enhance the Ontario tax reduction by increasing the amount of the basic tax reduction to \$197, plus an increase for inflation, effective January 1, 2004.

In addition, we are proposing an amendment that would increase the threshold at which an individual's entitlement to the Ontario child care supplement for working families is reduced. Beginning in July 2003, this threshold would be increased from \$20,000 to \$20,750 of family net income.

Proposed amendments in the bill also support corporations in this province. As you know, capital taxes hurt businesses, especially in their early start-up years when they can least afford it. We are proposing changes to the Corporations Tax Act that will reduce capital tax rates for all corporations by 10%, effective January 1, 2004. We intend to propose legislation to eliminate the job-killing capital tax by the time the federal government eliminates its capital tax.

Additional proposed tax improvements include a refundable tax credit for businesses on salaries and wages paid to an eligible apprentice in a qualifying skilled trade. I'd like to spend a couple of moments on that, if I could. That goes back to an opportunity Minister Ecker gave me as her parliamentary assistant when I was allowed to tour the province and visit a number of schools and stakeholders, and we dealt with the technical and vocational report.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Excellent.

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** Great job.

**Mr Dunlop:** I think it was a great—a good report; I'd better not say a "great" report. But certainly some of the comments we made in that report dealt with additional money for schools. Minister Ecker has already mentioned tonight about the \$90 million for technological equipment, but this part here, the tax credit for business that will take on more apprentices, I think is just such a winning combination.

I came from a background in construction, where I dealt with construction businesses for the last 25 years, and I know that one of the key areas of concern employers have when they train an apprentice is that quite often the apprentice will leave and go to a better job when they get their journeyman's papers. This tax credit will encourage more businesses to take on apprentices. Some may leave, but if they do leave at the end of their five years or four years of apprenticeship, the employer will have the benefit of the tax credit for his compensation in training that person for our workforce here in Ontario.

I congratulate the minister for including this in the budget. I think it's a winner for young people across the province, it's a winner for small business and it's certainly a winner for construction and manufacturing trades across our province as well.

Another proposed tax improvement would be the changes to the Ontario business research institute tax credit to improve its effectiveness as well.

Allow me to highlight some of our tax relief measures over the past seven and a half years. Since 1995, our government has dramatically reduced the tax burden on people and businesses. Tax cuts have been broadly based

and have played an important role in the province's comprehensive economic policy, which is designed to support and promote the following: we know about job creation, and we can say that again—I think it's 1.1 million net new jobs since 1995; innovation, entrepreneurship, economic growth, and of course prosperity. I was a small business person in 1995, and toward the end of the NDP's five years in government there weren't a lot of happy campers out there as far as small business people went. They didn't feel confident in the future of our province and were looking for dramatic changes. I say thanks to Mike Harris and the bravery he showed in setting tax cuts as an example to create jobs. We've come a long way, and I think the 1.1 million net new jobs will be what people will look at on the ballot when we do in fact go to the polls.

Our government has announced 225 tax cuts since 1995, and here's just a sampling of them: 10 tax cuts in the 1996 budget; 20 tax cuts in the 1997 budget; eight tax cuts in the 1997-98 inter-budget announcements; 29 tax cuts in the 1998 budget; 30 tax cuts in the 1999 budget; 67 tax cuts in the 2000 budget; nine tax cuts in the 2001-02 inter-budget announcement; 17 tax cuts in the 2001 budget; eight tax cuts in the 2002 budget; eight tax cuts announced as part of the November 25, 2002, energy incentives; and 17 tax cuts in the 2003 budget. I'm proud to say that Dalton McGuinty and Howard Hampton voted against every one of those tax cuts. It's too bad. Those tax cuts have created \$16 billion in additional revenue for this province.

Economic growth spurred by tax cuts has enabled our government to invest in priority programs and services: health care and education, the two top priorities for Ontarians. Across the province, people of all ages, backgrounds and income levels have benefited from these tax cuts. Ontario's tax cuts are the key to opportunity and prosperity.

What does this mean for Ontarians? It means more jobs and less welfare. Since 1995, our economy has created 1.1 million net new jobs. That's almost half the jobs created throughout all of Canada in the past seven years. I have to remind you that we represent about 33% of the population and our job creation has represented about 48% of all the jobs created in our country. And because of job opportunities and our work-for-welfare plan, 627,000 people have left welfare since 1995. I think that says something in itself right there. The people I've met who have had an opportunity with entrepreneurship and have had an opportunity to get jobs, some of their first good jobs—and some jobs they've got that have been created in this province have acted as stepping-stones for better jobs. That's what investment and innovative thinking do in a province like Ontario.

It means more income for families. Thanks to tax cuts and a growing economy, family incomes are rising dramatically. The average after-tax and after-inflation income of a two-parent family with children rose 19% between 1995 and 2000.

It means balanced budgets and less debt. Because we made the difficult choices, annual deficits are a thing of the past. With the \$484-million repayment we made in the 2002-03 fiscal year, we have now reduced the provincial debt by \$5 billion.

The fundamentals our government put in place helped us rebound from the downturn of 2001. Last year, Ontario's economy expanded by an estimated 3.9%, more than two and a half times the rate of the previous year. I've got to say there must have been some very, very difficult decisions between Minister Flaherty and Minister Ecker as we looked at the year 2001 and the after-effects of September 11. There hasn't been a time in this House in a number of decades, but certainly not in Canada or North America, when we've been so afraid of the future, with the terrorist activities of September 11, 2001. I'm so pleased that the people of Ontario have rebounded. The economy has been strong. There has been continued investment in our province and in our economy. Last year, our economy expanded by an estimated 3.9%, again, more than two and a half times the rate of the previous year.

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Private sector forecasters expect our economy to continue to grow on average by 2.8% this year, rising to 3.5% in 2004. With our economic plan in place, we will continue to move forward. The foundation of our plan is tax cuts. The reason? Because tax cuts work. I think you saw that last week in our rollout of The Road Ahead, Premier Eves's platform for the next election. We will continue on the road of tax cuts building a strong economy. Only with that strong economy can we continue to have the revenues flowing to the province to pay for the \$27 billion we paid into health care and the \$16 billion into education and the money into all the other thousands of programs delivered by the province.

I've been doing a calculation of the provincial investments in capital projects in program announcements in my riding. I'm pleased that between 1999 and 2003 our government has made announcements and investments of \$260 million in the riding of Simcoe North. That doesn't include monies such as the more than \$65 million, or 20.7% increase, for operating monies for school boards in the Simcoe County District School Board, or the additional \$37.31 million, or 30% increase between 1999 and 2003, that our Simcoe-Muskoka Catholic District School Board received. These are all on top of the \$260 million that the province has invested in my riding. As well, I'd like to thank the Attorney General for the investment of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission for the new entertainment centre and hotel complex at Casino Rama. It's been a very positive move for the area. Our economy is strong in the Orillia and Midland area, but investments like the casino—our summer and shoulder seasons are normally the best times of the year, and that's made our whole year-round tourism activity even stronger as we get more and more people visiting north Simcoe throughout the year.



Let me reiterate that governments don't create wealth and prosperity; people do. It is our role as government to create the right conditions for Ontario citizens and businesses to flourish. We've come a long way since 1995. With 1.1 million more people working in our province and five balanced budgets, I think the people of Ontario have confidence in the future of our province. They'll look forward to the government to continue down this road, to continue prosperity for many generations to come. With people like Mrs Ecker as our Minister of Finance, we'll continue down that path.

With that, I'd like to thank the minister for allowing me to follow her this evening. As her former PA in the Ministry of Education, I was pleased to be able to work with her. I've also got to go back to my early years with Minister Ecker when she was Minister of Community and Social Services and I was the warden of the county of Simcoe. In those days, the city of Orillia, the city of Barrie and the county of Simcoe were all fighting to see which municipal level of government would become the municipal consolidated service manager for Ontario Works and all the programs that are delivered by the ministry. I thank the minister for choosing the county of Simcoe at that time. Certainly we had the largest population, and that was our argument. But I think we represented the 250,000 people in the county of Simcoe very well, and the county has done a good job. We've seen the welfare rates in the county of Simcoe drop from 11,700 cases to 3,400. The savings are something like \$20 million a year to the residents of the county of Simcoe as a result of the Ontario Works program. That's something we're proud of, and it's certainly reflected in the county's budget because they've been allowed to spend money in areas like roads etc that they wouldn't have had the money before to do.

I thank you for choosing that, but I continue to thank you for bringing out Ontario Works and following through on that promise to take more and more people off the welfare rolls of our province.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Over 600,000.

**Mr Dunlop:** Yes, over 600,000 people, and that's along with the 1.1 million people who have found jobs in this province. Minister Ecker, I appreciate that. I congratulate you on your second balanced budget in a row. I am very pleased that we've been able to come this far, and I thank you for your efforts in all the ministries you've had. I congratulate you for a job well done as the Minister of Finance, and appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the member from St Catharines and the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. I was waiting for questions and comments, but I guess we don't have any questions and comments on the budget, or we're not allowed to do that here.

The first thought that comes to mind is how disappointing it must be for the Minister of Finance to

give this speech in an almost empty chamber, when surely a budget speech should have been presented way back on March 27 right in this place rather than in an automotive plant out in Brampton.

What I found absolutely fascinating is that earlier today, you may recall, we voted on Mr Conway's motion that the budget should first be presented in the House and the government actually voted against that. I know we're here to talk about the budget itself, but I've just got to say a few words about that.

What I find very interesting about that is that the government was condemned by literally every daily newspaper editorial in this province back in late March, early April for not presenting its budget in the House. We finally came back here on April 30, and after the throne speech, you, Speaker, found that there was a prima facie case of contempt. You didn't find contempt, but you felt there was a prima facie case of contempt in that the government did not present its budget right here in the House. Mr Conway was then given the floor and moved a motion which was a very simple motion, that the House declares it's the undoubted right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget. It was probably the most non-partisan motion I have seen in this House over the last eight years. After much debate, we voted on it today, and I think the people of Ontario should know that this government, after having been condemned editorially, after having been condemned by the people of Ontario, after you found that there was a prima facie case of contempt, voted against this motion.

1950

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we're addressing the issues of the budget, not the process. I think the honourable member is off topic.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That's close to being a point of order, but it's not.

**Mr Gerretsen:** What's interesting about that is that, yes, the contents of the budget are extremely important, no question, but I think the process as well is important, and I guess this member doesn't want to talk about the process at all. The net effect of what's happened here today with the earlier motion is that this government is still intent on presenting any future budgets in any old way it sees fit, even though the Speaker has condemned them for that and the people of Ontario have condemned them for that.

Now let's deal with the budget itself. First of all, it is not a balanced budget. It is not. You can balance a budget by moving figures around, by putting all sorts of fictitious revenue figures in a budget, but that doesn't mean it's a balanced budget. Don't take my word for it. I know I'm partisan, in exactly the same way as the members of the government are partisan speakers as well. I would like to take a look, for example, at a document issued by the Toronto-Dominion Bank Financial Group. What do they say about the budget? I'm reading from a release in March of this year. It states the following:

"The revenue assumptions are based on economic growth assumptions that—while not over the top—are on the optimistic side, especially given the heightened uncertainty with respect to the war and the state of the US economy." They go on to say, "But, even more potentially problematic"—and these are not my words but the words of the TD Bank Financial Group—"the government has for the second year in a row incorporated a roughly \$2-billion revenue windfall from asset sales, which—if last year is any indication—it may be hard-pressed to achieve. Moreover, the Ontario government has already included its share of the \$2 billion in additional federal transfers included in the February 2003 health accord that remains conditional on federal surplus funds being available at the end of the next fiscal year—probable, but hardly a slam dunk."

The point I'm trying to make is that there may be as much as a \$3-billion shortfall. That's in a budget of about \$70 billion, so we're talking about a potential shortfall of some 5%. I certainly hope it doesn't happen that way. But you may recall that the last time they had a tremendous amount of money in their budget for potential sale of assets, the people's assets, was back in 1999. That of course was also just before an election so they could say, theoretically, that the budget was balanced by putting in an over \$2-billion revenue item for the sale of the 407. We all know what happened to that sale. The 407 was sold basically in a fire sale.

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** The gift that keeps on giving.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Yes, the gift that keeps on giving. What's worse is that the government, on numerous occasions in the House, indicated that the rates on the users of the 407 would not go up beyond 2% or 3% per year, I think it was, and there have been increases by as much as 10%, 20% and 30% per year. Talk about a financial boondoggle, particularly for the people using the 407.

The point, quite simply, is this: this is not a balanced budget in any way, shape or form.

Let's take a look at some of the other issues. I heard the former parliamentary assistant, who was grovelling on the other side there, say—I'm positive I heard him correctly—that there was \$5 billion paid down on the public debt of this province. Well, I've got the budget document right here. It goes back from 1994-95 to the current year, 2003-04, and the most I can see being paid back in the last year is perhaps \$400 million to \$500 million. It doesn't come anywhere close to the \$5 billion that he just claimed was paid down on the public debt of the province.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** That's not what the auditor says.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Well, if it's not what the auditor says, he obviously hasn't looked at your budget document. I am just going by what it states in this document. Let's just go back a little. In the year 2000-01, the public debt of the province was \$110 billion, and now it's \$109.706 billion. So it hasn't gone down by more than about \$300 million or \$400 million during the last two to three years.

Let's take a look at some of the other things about this budget. Let's take a look at health care. I have particular interest in the community care access centres, as our party's long-term-care critic. You may recall that earlier today I gave a statement in which I said the Premier of this province was visited by the Home and Community Care Roundtable, an organization made up of about 25 different organizations that represent the interests of seniors and the vulnerable in our society. They include organizations well known to you and me, such as the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the Ontario Community Support Association, Communities for Home Health Care, the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens Organizations, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Health Coalition, the Retired Teachers of Ontario, the Victorian Order of Nurses, the United Senior Citizens of Ontario and I could go on and on and on.

These individuals met with the Premier and his staff and made an urgent plea to him earlier this month. They said, "Premier, in 1999, your Minister of Health made a statement in the House that you were going to increase the budget of the CCACs by some \$500 million, that there was going to be a program to be phased in over a number of years. You haven't done that, Premier, and as a result, the following has happened." This is directly from their letter to the Premier. They say that more than 115,000 vulnerable seniors and persons with debilitating diseases have lost services completely. They used to get some home care and nursing care services; they no longer get it. The number of hours of service has declined by some 30%. Over six million hours of services for home-making, personal support, nursing and therapy services have been cut. They go on and say, "Please live up to your commitment of 1998 and put in that \$76 million dollars this year." That would leave, then, a balance of about \$150 million of that commitment over the next two years.

You may recall that they of course didn't get it. The Premier didn't live up to his promise. Luckily, today we got the estimates, the actual estimates of what the government intends to spend in these different areas. What is the estimate for community care access centres? Well, let me just give you the figures. In last year's estimates, it was \$1.191 billion. What is it this year? \$1.204 billion, a \$13-million increase. It is at least \$60 million short of providing the kind of home care services that this government committed itself to.

Who are the losers in all that? The most vulnerable people in our society.

**2000**

The government likes to applaud the fact that it is giving the senior citizen education tax credit, worth about \$450 million. It will average—well, I'll take the minister's figure—something like \$450 per resident. Of course what she isn't saying is that, first of all, tenants won't be getting any of that money. Some people may be getting as much as \$27,000 per year, if you live in a multi-million dollar home. If you live in a home assessed



below the average, you may be getting something much less than that. What's interesting is this: it is a very smart move on the government's part to try to buy the votes of the seniors by saying, "You're all getting \$300 to \$400 back as your education property tax credit. You're not going to school; you no longer have to pay it." I suppose an argument could be made by a heck of a lot of young people. They could say, "Well, we're not using the health care system. Why should we pay for that?" If we kept going with that kind of analysis, we'd end up with a society that would no longer be Ontario, that would no longer be Canada, because people would only be paying for what they figure they need at any given moment. But that's not the kind of society we live in.

What would be a heck of a lot smarter for the government, and is something we have committed ourselves to in our election platform, is to take that \$450 million that they want to hand out to all the seniors out there and say, "OK, how can we really serve the senior population out there?" They could meet the requests of the long-term-care facilities, which are about \$250 million short, to give the proper nursing and personal care standards in our long-term-care homes, and the \$250 million for community care so that all those people who are living in their own homes who want to recuperate from hospital procedures or who have some sort of chronic health care problem could be properly looked after.

In other words, wouldn't it have made an awful lot more sense to make that \$450 million available for those seniors who either need it in nursing homes for increased standards of nursing and personal care or need it in home care so they could stay in their own homes longer? In survey after survey, if you ask a senior, "What do you prefer? Do you prefer to live in an institution or would you prefer to live in your own home?" the vast majority, 99% of them, will say, "I prefer to live in my own home environment. I'd like to live at home, but I need some services to do that." The government could have accomplished that by taking that \$450 million they're prepared to give away to all the senior citizens and actually channel it to those individuals who need it. That's what government should be all about. Government should be all about helping those individuals get the proper services they need. I think that would have been the compassionate way of dealing with this.

Let's go on to some of the other health care issues. It's interesting. We've heard a lot about two-tier systems. I just want the people of Ontario to know that we, in our policy platform on health care, are committing ourselves to passing a law, a commitment to medicare act, that will make universal public medicare the law in Ontario. Isn't that the right thing to do? Isn't that the best thing we could possibly do for individuals, to ensure they will get the medical services required?

It's interesting. When you take a look at the number of doctors or nurses we have in the province of Ontario and compare it to how many nurses or doctors there are elsewhere in Canada, we are by far the lowest-ranking province. We have 95 doctors for every 100,000 people

in our population. The rest of Canada has closer to 100 doctors for every 100,000 people in their population. We have 67 nurses per 10,000 population. What does the rest of Canada have? They have 85 nurses per 10,000 population.

The point is quite simply this: as a result of the mismanagement by this government of our health care system over the last eight years, we have in so many different ways become the absolute lowest standard in Canada. I suppose there is no better way to look at it than how we treat our senior citizens in our long-term-care facilities. It is hard to believe that when we compare ourselves to jurisdictions of roughly an equal size in terms of population, when we compare ourselves to Mississippi, Louisiana and to some of the other provinces and states in Canada and the United States and to some of the European countries of roughly our population base, we provide the least amount of nursing and personal care for the people in our long-term-care facilities. Even that standard, about 2.25 hours per day per senior, even that criterion has been done away with by this government. What's the net result? The net result is that the people who live in those homes aren't getting as much nursing care as they should be getting. We all know that the people there are getting older, getting frailer, have a much greater acuity level than they ever had before. The people who work in those facilities work extremely hard, but they simply cannot keep up. As a result, an awful lot of our seniors are neglected to some degree or another in the long-term-care homes. I once again say that this government would have served the neediest in our population an awful lot better by making sure that the funding was available there, rather than providing it for all the seniors out there.

There are so many other issues that we can talk about and debate in the budget, but let me just tell you this: I am absolutely convinced, from the platform policies that have now come out from all three parties, that it is only the Liberal Party, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, that can once again bring back to Ontario a sense of compassion, a sense of balance and the kind of Ontario that I think you and I want for ourselves and for our children.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate? The member for—

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** Prince Edward-Hastings, the greatest riding in the province. It's a pleasure to represent it.

I'm pleased to follow the member for Kingston and the Islands on this issue. It is a bit of a challenge to speak on. Do you perceive it as a genuine budget, or is it an election platform in the guise of a budget? I think it's probably an election platform, but still, we will give it the respect a budget deserves.

First of all, it didn't hurt all that much to do it in the Legislature, did it? It wasn't that painful. I do hope you're not offended; I'd like to make a little constructive criticism on several points that I think you will find

beneficial and want to incorporate. That's my role, and I think you appreciate the role.

Having read and studied and listened to it, the first thing I'd like to advise you is that it's not a balanced budget. It's not. I mean, you can keep saying it. It's like saying, "We're going to fix health care," but saying you're going to fix health care doesn't fix health care. Saying it's a balanced budget doesn't make it a balanced budget. Now, this isn't me saying it. This is a fairly complicated province to do a budget on, so we look to people who are neutral—no political party—but have great financial expertise. Standard and Poor's, a firm that has been around a long time rating governments and their financial viability, says it's actually a \$1.2-billion deficit. The Dominion Bond Rating Service, a neutral organization that's very, very credible, I'm sure you will agree, and the TD Bank, again an organization that's extremely credible and extremely neutral, say that you actually have a \$2-billion deficit.

You're saying it's balanced, but it's balanced if you sell \$2 billion in assets. Let's think about it. It's as if I sat down at home with my family—and this province is like a very large family—and said, "Look, we have worked out a budget for next year that will enable us to balance all of our income and expenses for the house, except we have to sell the house. We will have to sell the house, but once we've sold it, we'll be balanced." You're selling assets, and if they don't sell well, you're going to sell them at fire sale prices, and that is very unfair to the people of Ontario.

**2010**

First of all, certain things are essentially public services that should not be sold. But I would remind you of the old axiom that you'll never buy anything as cheap as something you already own. You're going to sell off things that were bought with hard-earned taxpayers' dollars to get re-elected. I really fear this is a re-election document; it's not a budget.

To balance your budget, you're going to include in it \$967 million from the federal government, but you know from your discussions with them that that money comes only if there is a sufficient surplus at the federal government. That's a best guess, but you know things change rapidly in this world. The issue with mad cow disease has the potential to have a very negative impact on a lot of farms and a lot of jobs in manufacturing. That could erode some of that surplus, so the budget is even less balanced.

And there's an innocuous little line in there that says you're going to cut \$700 million from in-year savings. What does that mean? More cuts to public service? The words "public service" are significant. The public pays taxes for service. If you think you can find more cuts within the public service—first of all, I'm going to suggest to you that you pretend you're a farmer, or perhaps you even are a farmer. Call the Ministry of Agriculture and then come back to us and tell us how long you waited on the line. How long did the recording say it would be before they got to your call? Try dealing

with the Family Responsibility Office even now. I can't picture it with further cuts. Try to deal with the Family Responsibility Office. And if you're an Ontarian with a disability who needs to apply for ODSP, try going through the process that, because of the lack of staff and lack of support, we're forcing our most vulnerable citizens to go through. There is not \$700 million in in-house savings unless you're prepared to sell out even more Ontario citizens to get re-elected.

Every day on every media outlet is the issue of safety and security in our province and in the world. We live in extremely difficult and challenging times. We heard statements made within this Legislature following that horrible event of September 11, and now I look at the budget and realize that the budget cuts \$181 million out of safety and security. That's the wrong direction.

**Mr Smitherman:** Way to go.

**Mr Parsons:** Yes, way to go, that once the issue appears a little bit quieter, we can chop the money there. The people of Ontario aren't looking for less safety and less security.

I go through the budget and I look at seniors. As a government, you've cut home care. There's no money in here to restore that. You've raised nursing home fees. Now, you were going to do a 15% increase, which you tried to put through very quietly on a Friday after the House was recessed, and you backed off to do 7%, 4% and 4%; 7% plus 4% plus 4% is 15%. I believe it's fair to say that no seniors in this province will have had a 15% increase in their income over the three years, and you're still doing it.

You've announced some money into long-term care. But the public needs to know that about a quarter of that money is actually coming from the residents; it's not government money.

I have visited a number of seniors' homes in my community, and I am intrigued by your philosophy regarding meals. You allocate so many dollars per senior per day in a nursing home. Similarly, for provincial jails and detention centres, you allow a certain number of dollars per inmate. Intriguingly, you allow about three times as much per day for an inmate as you do for one of our seniors. You fund our seniors at about \$5 a day for meals, and you fund our jails at about \$15 a day for meals. Wouldn't it be nice if your government would treat our seniors as well as you treat our prisoners? That would be a phenomenal improvement for the seniors in our community. You should be ashamed of that, and this budget doesn't change it.

Health care: I have been told that in 1995 two hospitals in Ontario had deficits. I now understand, if the information is correct, all but two hospitals had deficits. Granted, there's money in your budget for new construction, but the reality for our health care in the hospitals is that they're virtually all experiencing significant deficits.

There aren't a lot of things they can play with in a hospital to make cuts. In my community, because of a \$2-million shortfall, they're going to be getting rid of



nurses, and they are doing what every other hospital in Ontario is doing: employing part-time nurses, part-time registered professional nurses, trying to operate at the minimal level, not to break even but to minimize the deficit position they're in. They're in a deficit position because, although they're providing quality care at the best possible delivery cost, they're not being funded.

In this budget, this government has talked about 8,000 new nurses. There's no money in the budget to pay for 8,000 new nurses. This government has made statements very supportive of nurse practitioners, but there's no money in this budget to pay nurse practitioners.

The multi-year funding concept is good; I applaud that. We're going to tell our hospitals and we're going to tell our schools for several years ahead what the level will be, but if the level that you grant them is too low, knowing it two or three years ahead still doesn't enable them to provide the service that they need to provide to the patients.

In education, the attacks on students with high needs, special-education needs, continues unabated. I do not understand, because I know the phone calls that come to my office from parents who can't get their children an educational assistant, can't get in the special-education program. I don't understand how I can get those calls and be bothered by it and you must be getting those calls on that side of the House and are not reacting to it.

Our young people who have special needs in schools continue to get short shrift. Rozanski gave a report which indicated very clearly, in simplest terms, that the money you took out of the education system needed to go back in. Within \$1 million or so, that balanced on it. You immediately pledged \$610 million last year because of Rozanski's recommendations. You actually spent \$349 million. You pledged \$610 million; you spent \$349 million.

One of the challenges facing us as a society is encouraging people to vote. Only about half the people in Ontario vote, slightly over half at the provincial level, because they're becoming very cynical about politicians and about the legislative process. Holding the budget in a training centre doesn't help at all to get respect for the Legislature. When you keep saying the budget is balanced and it's not and when you say you're giving more money for special education and you actually don't deliver what you're saying, it makes our young people cynical enough that they say, "I'm not getting involved with this." If our young people do not vote, we are on a downward, very dangerous slide into losing the democracy that the rest of the world envies. It is not just a matter of these numbers to try to get re-elected; it is much more serious than that, ladies and gentlemen. It is serious because it drives the voters away when they see games being played—and games are being played.

We heard a statement earlier about the wonderful new transit plan that would allow you to go from Peel to Durham with an electronic card. You need to mention you can't go through Toronto, because the TTC is not part of it. Why aren't they part of it? It's not that they

don't want to be part of it; they have been so starved for cash since 1995 that they don't have the \$40 million that it takes to buy into the technology to make this work. It would be great for the citizens of the greater Toronto area to genuinely be able to get on something in Peel and travel through on the TTC and get off at Durham, but it ain't going to happen. When you talk about it, you need to mention, "But there is this little area in the middle called Toronto that you can't ride through."

2020

The Ministry of the Environment continues to struggle in terms of funding. This budget doesn't improve it. There's so much emphasis in this budget on safe water. You're going to have the plants, you're going to have the pipes cleaned, you're going to have the technology to take this dirty water and make it clean drinking water. Would you not sit down and think about it? Would it not be simpler to protect the groundwater source from getting polluted, protect their streams, protect their underground water? Instead of investing money in the technology to clean up the dirty water, keep the water clean. That's not rocket science; that's fairly elementary. But there's no money devoted in this budget. There's no emphasis at all on keeping the water clean, and I simply don't understand that. I guess there's no ribbon-cutting at a water treatment plant if you don't have to treat the water to clean it.

I have a prime example right in my community where there's a company that wants to considerably expand the Richmond landfill, which is just outside the town of Napanee. This government has approved a greatly scoped environmental assessment. They said, "We don't need a full environmental assessment; we'll just restrict it to a few things to check, and that will speed the process up." Well, it hasn't sped the process up, because all the parties are in court arguing over it. But it would seem to me that if that dump really doesn't present any risk to the groundwater, then it would pass an environmental assessment. So why would you reduce the criteria for environmental assessment unless you feared that it wouldn't pass it?

If you think about it, you want to expand a dump that is located on fractured limestone. You may not be geologists—I'm not—but the word "fractured" certainly tells me everything I need to know about the fact that there's going to be leakage out of this dump into the groundwater, and there's nothing you can do to clean it once it gets into there.

For rural Ontario, groundwater is the difference between being in business and not, living in an area and not living there. You can have the finest house in the world, you can have the greatest farmland and the most prosperous farm operation, but if you don't have clean water for yourselves and for your livestock, then that land just becomes dormant, barren land for absolutely generations. This government still has nothing in this budget for the Ministry of the Environment to address the very simple object of, "Let's keep the water clean so we don't have to clean it up after."

As an engineer, I have a fair appreciation for the shortages of apprentices in Ontario. We have a crying need for apprentices in a lot of our skilled trades. You're going to give a tax credit for employers to hire an apprentice, and that's great. But you also very quietly implemented a \$400-per-course fee for apprentices. Apprentices have signed up with a company to start their apprenticeship. They work at a considerably reduced salary compared to the regular tradespeople. On top of that, they have to go on unemployment to go back and take these courses, and in many cases they have to travel somewhere and pay temporary living expenses while they're taking these courses. They have to buy their own tools for many of the trades. I'm telling you, quietly adding the \$400-per-class fee is not an incentive to attract people into apprenticeships. When you are short a particular occupation, I would suggest to you that you want to do things to attract them into it, not drive them away. A tax credit for the employer is great for the employer. The more employers will hire, the better the apprenticeship program, but you need to do something to attract our young people into apprenticeship. You're failing miserably, and in fact you're penalizing them with this \$400 fee.

There was reference made by the minister that the opportunity bonds have sold very well. There was going to be \$50 million, and now that they're actually sold there's \$100 million. So now we have \$100 million for municipalities to work with. That's not \$100 million that fell out of the heavens; it's not manna, it's debt. It is debt that the municipalities have now incurred. So rather than boasting about it, you have again downloaded to the municipalities an additional \$100 million. Granted, the person who buys the bonds doesn't have to pay Ontario tax on them, but the municipality has to pay interest to the bondholder. You have very quietly transferred debt, so it's an opportunity for you to download something more. I guess that's what "opportunity bonds" means: a wonderful opportunity for the government to download a debt onto our local municipalities. That's too bad. I think that's a shame.

I look at some other things in here. There's a reference to people on ODSP in the budget. You're going to allow a tax credit to them that will enable them to benefit; increased support for caregivers, and you're going to have a tax credit.

If someone on ODSP who's disabled and living with their parents receives \$708 a month, which is about \$8,500 a year, that's not very much money, folks. If they're living on their own on ODSP, they can receive the huge sum of \$11,160 a year. That's only about \$8,000 below the poverty level. What appears to be generous in here—first of all, it says that they're going to have tax credits. When you make \$8,496 a year, a tax credit is not going to have a big effect on your income. If you don't pay taxes, it's going to do nothing for you. This will mean, though, an average tax saving for people of \$300 a year. So now we have someone who makes \$11,160—and I would challenge anyone on the government side to

try to live for one year on \$11,160 and pay rent, purchase clothes and buy food. Now, instead of \$11,160, they may make as much as \$11,460, still \$8,000 below the poverty level.

This doesn't improve anything for people on ODSP. In fact, the budget doesn't provide one penny in increased funding for people who have been unfortunate enough to have a disability. I've never met anyone who chose to have a disability, but they're being penalized for the disability by being made to live far below the poverty level. In this budget there's absolutely nothing on it.

On the health portion, you speak about waiting lists being too long and that you're going to deal with them. Even with this budget you will continue to have the horrendous situation where two thirds of the individuals in our province who have been diagnosed with cancer will not have access to radiation within the eight weeks recommended by the medical community. The waiting lists for the most critical people still will not be improved. Granted, some of your friends will be operating private MRI clinics, but there still will not be radiation technology. So the waiting lists for those who need the cure don't get any better.

I hope the government side has understood that these are very mild constructive criticisms. The atmosphere perhaps isn't as nice as it was at Magna, but I think we have an obligation to point out, on behalf of the people of Ontario, that this budget is an election document that really doesn't have defensible numbers.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I would like to mention that before I came to the House today I attended a funeral for an individual in St Catharines who was highly respected. This gentleman's name was Paul Salfi.

All of us have gone to funerals of our friends, and I think one of the marks of a person who has been a major part of the community is that he is an individual who gathers at the funeral people from all walks of life. Members of the House would find it amusing in its way that as pallbearers, on one side of the casket was the president of the Progressive Conservative association provincially in St Catharines and on the other side was an executive member of the Liberal Party. So you had both Liberals and Conservatives, and I'm sure New Democrats, in St Julia's church in St Catharines.

There were two different schools: one a Catholic high school, Denis Morris, which is right across the street from Sir Winston Churchill, where Paul Salfi coached, and both of them had students and teachers there to pay tribute. An individual of great intellect—you would have enjoyed it. You represent Stratford as part of your riding, Mr Speaker. Paul Salfi loved Shakespeare. He taught English in such a way that everybody who had him as an English teacher would remember that experience.

While it was a very sad gathering, because we are always sorry to lose an individual of that kind—and indeed the church was completely full, overflowing with people who were there to pay tribute to him—it was nice



at least to have his contribution to his community and to the members of the family recognized on that occasion.

I should tell you that he was also interested in politics. He stopped in to my constituency office a few weeks ago and left me a letter, which I will not read in the House today. It was a letter concerning his observations on the budget outside the House and a few other observations on what the government was or wasn't doing. I say that only to indicate that here was an individual interested in the process, interested in politics, interested in the arts, interested in the classics and interested and involved in sports.

2030

I know in all of our communities we have such individuals. I think their mark on our community and on individuals in the community is seen by the number of people who are at a funeral home, by the number of people who attend a funeral, by the number of people who send messages to the family. Certainly I say to his wife Lillian and son Jamie and daughter Patricia and all members of the family that people in our community were extremely sad today, but were celebrating the life of Paul Salfi.

Sometimes when we're in this House we think that what is important is what we do in this House, and indeed it is important. But in events and circumstances of this kind, we recognize that there are people outside the realm of active politics who make a substantial contribution to a community. Paul Salfi, who was a good friend of so many in our community, and I was pleased to be able to call him a friend and confidante, is no longer with us in terms of his physical body, but his spirit lives on and his memory lives on.

I want to thank you for permitting me to make some remarks about Paul Salfi, which we sometimes can, and it's showing a little bit of leeway in the rules. But I also want to speak about the budget, because at long last we have the budget debate in this House. I think that would have been good in the first place. Much has been said. Editorial after editorial, experts in the field of public affairs and the general public have expressed the view that this is where the budget debate should take place.

Earlier today we had a vote on contempt of the House. A ruling had been made by the Speaker that there was a *prima facie* case of contempt of the House but that the House would have to decide. The two opposition parties voted for Mr Conway's motion indicating there was contempt—his motion didn't even say that. His motion, interestingly enough, was milder than that. It simply said that the budget should first be presented in this House.

I won't dwell on the issue a long time, but I think the people of this province decided that that should be the case. I must say I was genuinely surprised at the degree of anger, the degree of annoyance with this manoeuvre, obviously advised upon the government by what I call political whiz kids, political smart characters in the backrooms, and perhaps not agreed to entirely by members of the cabinet or of the government caucus. I

think this is the place where the debate should take place, and indeed there will be a difference of opinion.

I must say even the opposition would see virtue in some provisions in the budget. There's no budget I've ever seen in this House that was all wrong because the government presented it or all right because I happened to be part of the government presenting the budget. I think there would be a consensus in this House that this budget has some measures that are good and some that are not. For instance, my colleague mentioned those who are on Ontario disability support payments or pensions. Those individuals have not had a raise for some 10 years, through two different governments, through various circumstances. The member for Don Valley West waves a copy of the glossy, expensive document that he has, his Conservative platform. As he leaves, I'll try to show him this—I know it's illegal to have this, Mr Speaker, but you will recall, because you're a reader of Maclean's magazine, in the May 19 issue a 30-page insert paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario. Is it straightforward information? No. It is what I think every fair-minded person out there would say is government propaganda.

I want to say to the people of this province that, as they watch the commercials on television—I'm not talking about the ones paid for by the Progressive Conservative Party, and there are a few of those there now, and that is certainly legitimate, but the millions upon millions of dollars that have been expended on government commercials that extol the virtues of government policies: the full-page ads in newspapers; the inserts we saw last Wednesday in various newspapers; the huge signs on the highway saying something like, "Building Ontario Together: Ernie Eves, Premier"; the radio ads that talk about the budget and how it is so good for the people of Ontario; the pamphlets that seem to arrive weekly.

None of them could match even the weak advertising content directive from the provincial government itself, which says that the following, and I think the public would like to know—they're paying for these ads—should happen:

"Material should be presented in unbiased and objective language, and in a manner free from partisan promotion of government policy and political argument. Material should not directly attack or scorn the views, policies or actions of others such as the policies and opinions of opposition parties or groups. Information should avoid party-political slogans or images. This may involve restrictions on the use of ministerial photographs.

"Care should be taken to ensure that government advertising material is not used or reproduced by members of political parties in support of political activities without appropriate approval.

"All advertising material and the manner of presentation should comply with relevant law, including broadcasting, media and electoral law."

These are fairly weak guidelines, and the advertising I've seen by this government, the carpet-bombing of the province with advertising, does not comply with this. If a

government's policies are good enough, surely by press releases, by government announcements, by speeches by members of the Legislature in their own constituencies and others, they can present it in such a way that the public may or may not disagree. But in my view it is an abuse of public office, an abuse of power and some people would use the term "cheating," in an electoral sense, to use government funds, taxpayer funds, to do this.

If the political party wants to do it, and some members put out political pamphlets, that's fine with me. I think that's part of the political system. But I think the government has shown disdain for the electorate through this, and I suspect there are some government members who believe it to be excessive and inappropriate, though I don't expect they're going to rise in the House to say it this evening.

I see my friend Bill Murdoch here. I want to touch on something else, because I know that he, as a former municipal political representative, would likely agree with me, though I don't ask him to get up to agree, that this idea contained in the Conservative platform that every time a municipal council wishes to, or is forced to, raise taxes, it must have a referendum is bizarre to say the least. I found no one, but no one, of any political stripe—perhaps those who are candidates for the Conservatives who are municipal politicians might be in favour—who is in favour of that. It's absolutely bizarre. I don't think it's really going to get you any more votes than you had before. The core of people who believe that are going to vote for you anyway.

But those of us who have sat on municipal councils and watched senior levels of government—particularly provincial, because the provincial government has a closer relationship with the municipal governments—download responsibilities and put obligations on municipalities, recognize that those municipalities sometimes, as a result, are forced to raise the municipal tax levy. They, at the end of their term, as we do, must face the electorate. If the electorate is displeased, the electorate will indicate so by putting those people out of office and electing new people.

2040

I want to know if any government member, outside of Tory candidates, has found any municipal elected representative who believes this is a virtuous policy. I can't find them. That tells me that policy didn't come from the elected members. That came from the backrooms. There is a name I use in this House often, because I see his name in the paper and on television from time to time. He is alleged to be a very powerful person, a gentleman by the name of Guy Giorno. He appears to have—

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** What seat did he win?

**Mr Bradley:** The member my friend Bill Murdoch asks a very good question: "What seat did he win?" Indeed, I wonder what seat, because he seems to have more power even than some members of the cabinet. I'm often surprised by that, and I would think that some of the

government members are probably as annoyed at this as when they watch him write the platform. If you let the elected representatives write the platform, or even write the budget, it might be somewhat different than it is now.

I look at the need for—I started out with this—a raise in the payments for those on disability in this province who have had that frozen for some 10 years. These are people who are trying to cope. Sometimes they get some employment they're able to take on. They should not be penalized for doing so if it is within the bounds of reality. They don't expect that to be the case, but I think there's a need there.

Seniors in this province, in terms of health care, recognize the importance of having funding for health care. Every time a tax is cut in the province, and I know there's a dangling of bait before seniors now saying, "Look, you don't have to pay the education tax any more"—let me tell you, all those taxes go into one pot; they don't just go into an education pot. It may well mean less money for nursing homes, more user fees for seniors when they want to get prescription drugs or access the health care system. It comes back to haunt you. The government has already cut taxes on many occasions. I think most of the public recognizes now that there's a need for revenue to provide the kinds of services people need and want. Many of those are services for seniors.

People with macular degeneration, a terrible eye affliction, have had to go through several hoops and barriers set up by this government, which finally capitulated to opposition demands that some compensation and payments under OHIP be provided for macular degeneration. But today it's still difficult to get this particular service. I think that's important.

Another one that I get a lot of calls on, and perhaps other members do, is the prostate specific antigen test, which helps to detect at least the possibility of cancer of the prostate. People have to pay for that test. That is wrong.

**Mr Murdoch:** Ten bucks

**Mr Bradley:** In some cases it may be \$10. I know it can be up to \$50 in some cases. It seems to me that at least once a year, or ordered by a medical specialist, this test should be available, particularly when it can save lives or improve the quality of life of people.

I look at my friend Bob Runciman. I hear this government talk about security and police and worry a lot about those issues. I look in this budget and there's a \$181-million cut in that budget this year. That's after a \$60-million cut last year. I know it's difficult for my friend Mr Runciman to rise in the House, as he does with such vigour and vitality to denounce the opposition, or to denounce another level of government or to talk about the virtues of government policy, when they've cut \$60 million last year and \$181 million this year from his budget.

I look at public transit in this province. We in the Niagara Peninsula want to see GO Transit service come to the Niagara Peninsula. The other alternative, of course, is VIA Rail, or a combination of both. What I think could



happen is this: the federal government has already said they've got their money on the table. They've challenged the provincial government to allow more trains—that is, public transit, GO Transit—to come to the Niagara region. Perhaps tourists will use it to come to the Niagara region, to Niagara Falls, St Catharines and other parts of the region. Perhaps those who have medical appointments or have to commute could use it at the same time. That would be beneficial. Yet I noted in—when was it, Bill—1998 this government got right out of the public transportation business completely, which I thought was unfortunate.

There's a need in our area where we have prime agricultural land to save that agricultural land, but if you want to save that agricultural land, it seems to me you have to save the farmers first; that's exceedingly important.

I notice the issue of insurance premiums has reared its head again around the province. Particularly with car insurance, but with house insurance and other forms of insurance, rates have gone through the ceiling in many cases. That is something that may put some people out of business, hurt some businesses and certainly be hurtful to individuals who need car insurance, house insurance or other forms of insurance that are required, with high premiums being the word of the day.

In education, I think what people are looking for is, again, stability and a good feeling out there.

I lament the fact that I see the government in its latest document getting involved in wedge issues again. Do their advisers say they're politically astute? Yes. But do they bring the province together? I think we, as political representatives, have a role in bringing out the best in people, the generosity of people, generosity of spirit of people in the community. When we set one set of the population against the others, when we dangle special favours in front of some at the expense of others, when we set one group of people against another group of people through legislative measures, when we rail on against—or we have what we call a dog whistle. A dog whistle is a whistle that only the people you want to hear, hear it—the dog, in this case. If you want to stir up resentment against immigrants to the country, you simply use some code words, and that conjures up in the mind something that has been said about immigrants over the years.

Jim Coyle of the Toronto Star wrote a column a number of years ago where he talked about what they said about each new set of immigrants as they arrived in the country. The remarks were not complimentary. But it is said again today, and down through the generations—your ancestors and mine, perhaps they said that about, Mr Speaker—and now new generations have things said about them that are not complimentary. I think that's fanned by policies which aim, in an indirect way or a direct way, at the immigrant population.

In our community, we have a proposal for two new hospitals, right across the street from one another, to replace two existing hospitals. It's an outstanding pro-

posal. Why? It didn't come from the hospital destruction commission, as I call it; it came from the local community. The Catholic hospital and the general hospital got together and said, "We have this wonderful plan. We think it can work. We can share resources. We'll bury the hatchet of past arguments." I think that would be good for our community, and I'm certainly supportive.

Lastly, I would hope that we improve substantially the care that is given in our home care homes—our nursing homes and seniors' homes in this province.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** At the outset, I want to let you know that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Sault Ste Marie.

I want to deal with a couple of issues that arise, both from the budget—the bogus budget that the government brought in at Magna Corp—and also one issue that has arisen with respect to the release of their platform.

Let me deal with the first one that has a direct link to Magna. Of course, that has to do with the gift that this government is going to make to one Frank Stronach, who desperately needs help to pay for his property taxes on his \$10-million estate—I think that's the value that we're putting on it. Poor Frank, having great difficulty paying his property taxes, is now going to benefit from a change that this government made and announced in that bogus budget. That, of course, is the change that will say that seniors who own or rent their homes are now going to be eligible for a credit that will reimburse their full residential education property tax, or just over a third of their property taxes. Because that is uncapped in the proposal that the government has put forward, this of course is going to result in a huge benefit for the wealthy like poor Frank, who can't afford to pay his property taxes, I'm sure.

In short, Mr Stronach, who owns Magna, where the bogus budget was held, is going to get a cheque from the government of one third of his property tax. Given that his estate is worth about \$10 million, I suspect that that is going to be a quite substantial bit of money that he's going to get back from this government. I'm sure he needs it; he's not wealthy enough. I'm going to deal with his personal income, and the benefit he's going to get on his personal income, in a minute. But the first gift that the government gives to its friends, rich corporate friends, is that one.

What's also interesting as a result of that change, which sees seniors who are extremely wealthy get a big tax break from this government, is that, of course, everybody else suffers because the promised 10% reduction in education property taxes for everyone else has gone by the wayside to pay for Frank and others, who obviously need this relief so desperately.

## 2050

It was interesting that the Toronto Sun wasn't very happy with this prospect either. You know that the Toronto Sun is usually quite supportive of anything this government puts forward. The Toronto Sun is a big supporter of the Conservative party. But even the Toronto Sun has some huge difficulties in knowing that Frank

Stronach and Steve Stavros and others are going to have big chunks of their property taxes paid for courtesy of everybody else—people who least need to have their property taxes paid for.

You see, it's worth pointing out that there already was a program in place to support low-income and modest-income seniors with their property taxes. That was a change made by our government. So seniors in the province who were having trouble dealing with property taxes—usually as a result of the downloading of services by this provincial government on to municipalities without any corresponding funding to go with those programs—as a result of changes we made, were getting property tax relief, and well they should, because we want those seniors to be able to stay in their homes. There is no reason—no reason whatsoever—for us to be giving property tax relief to millionaires in Ontario. This is what the government proposes to do with this budget change.

Here's what the Toronto Sun had to say:

"In the 1999 election, the Ontario Tories promised 'we'll cut the provincial portion of residential property taxes by 20%, phased in over our next term.'

"It's right there on page 11 of their 'Blueprint'...

"They promised this would provide 'relief to every homeowner and renter in Ontario' since they'd require apartment owners to pass along the savings to tenants through lower rents.

"Of course, that was then and this is now.

"The Tories did implement the first 10% of this promised tax cut. But in Finance Minister Janet Ecker's March 27 budget—the one delivered at the auto parts plant"—and it's noteworthy that the Toronto Sun raises that—"they broke the second half of this promise. Instead, they used the final 10% of the promised general tax cut to pay for an enriched program of tax relief for seniors, one of their core groups of supporters.

"Thus was born their new promise to give seniors an average \$475 tax break on the education portion of their property taxes.

"As John Williamson, Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, notes, 'It's bad public policy not only to break your election promises, but to set tax policy based on such things as age or gender.'"

I'll remind you that John Williamson, Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, is no friend of the NDP but a big friend of the Conservatives. He's not very excited about this proposal either. He says, and I'm just going to quote it again, "It's bad public policy not only to break your election promises, but to set tax policy based on such things as age or gender."

I go back to the editorial:

"The Tories argue seniors have paid into the education system all their lives and, especially since they no longer have children in the system, deserve a special break. Fine. Many younger taxpayers have no kids in the system, either, and use far less health care than seniors. Using Tory logic, where's their special tax break?

"The Tories have made a bad idea even worse by not setting a cap on the value of a property to which this tax break applies." Hence Magna and Mr Stronach. "While the average senior will get \$475, those with homes valued at, say, \$5 million, will get about \$20,000." Well, we know that Mr Stronach is going to get more because his house is valued at about \$10 million. "At least the Tories should cap the value of a home to which the break applies at around \$300,000.

"But that would simply be mitigating the damage caused by one targeted tax by targeting it even more. Instead, we believe the Tories should do what they said they would do in 1999. As we recall, that was one of the principles" of the Common Sense Revolution.

I'll remind you, Speaker, and those who are watching, that that's an editorial from the Toronto Sun, usually very supportive of initiatives brought in by this government and not usually very critical publicly of things this government is doing. But I guess even the Toronto Sun realizes how absolutely asinine it is to ask other taxpayers to pay for a property tax break for the likes of Frank Stronach. It's unacceptable; it's ridiculous; it shouldn't be happening.

What's interesting is that the Conservative candidate in Nickel Belt was invited by CBC Radio in northeastern Ontario to come on to their show. They had a 25th anniversary program just before Easter, on the Thursday before Easter weekend. The issue the CBC wanted to deal with was this very promise the government had made, this commitment to give a tax break to seniors, even wealthy seniors, to help them pay for property taxes. What was interesting was that every caller but one to the show was absolutely opposed to what the government was doing—opposed. And the Tory candidate tried desperately—desperately—to defend the government initiative and got nowhere.

The people who called, and many of them were seniors, gave two reasons. The first reason they had to be opposed was that they said very publicly that they recognized the benefit of education and the benefit that Ontario realizes by having a well-educated workforce, and that education in Ontario produces our doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges and all of those people who make our society work. Those people who called in and were supportive—and only one, I remind you, was opposed—made mention of the fact that they were quite prepared to pay for education because they benefited by having the service of a doctor, they benefited by having the service of a nurse educated in Ontario, they benefited by having the services of many, many other people who benefit from Ontario's education system. They were quite prepared to continue to pay for that because they recognize the value in it for them, even as seniors.

The second argument made was that many of them expressed concern that if the government was prepared to do this to benefit them because they were seniors and no longer have kids in school, what would happen, for example, if a government decided that younger people should not pay for CPP or old age security because



younger people were not directly benefiting? Their argument was that you can change this and younger people would have a very legitimate argument to say, "I don't benefit from getting old age security or CPP. Why should I pay?" And many were—

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation):** Oh, get serious.

**Ms Martel:** The member says, "Get serious." That's what people said when they called in. I am relating to you what callers said when they called in. Maybe you don't like that your poor Tory candidate had nothing to say and only one person supported him. I bet you he was feeling pretty bad by the end of that interview as well. But the fact of the matter is, seniors called in to say, "We recognize there's a common good for programs that all of us contribute to. Younger people help us and support us by paying for CPP and OAS; we should be paying to support our grandchildren and other people's children in a first-class education system."

That was the reaction from people in our region to the proposal put forward, and the Conservative candidate got nowhere—absolutely nowhere—in trying to sell this initiative. People saw through it, people didn't accept it, and I think when people understand just how great the benefit is that people like Frank Stronach and others are going to receive from this as their tax dollars get diverted to paying for property taxes for wealthy people, they're going to like it even less.

The second gift for Mr Stronach that occurred on the same day the bogus budget was held at his facility at Magna had to do with the elimination of the high-income surtax. Of course, Mr Stronach benefits quite directly from this. I should point out that it's a budget promise that the government intends to completely eliminate the high-income surtax. When that surtax is eliminated, it will result in a \$3.5-million personal savings for one Mr Stronach, based on his 2001 income.

Poor Frank needs help paying his property taxes, and now poor Frank needs some help getting some of his income tax back. He's going to get a windfall of \$3.5 million because of this government's tax initiative to do away with the surtax on high-income earners.

In fact, full elimination of this surtax is going to cost Ontario \$3.1 billion alone, 95% of which will go to the 5% of taxpayers with incomes over \$100,000 a year. Ninety-five per cent of the benefit of that change, a \$3.1-billion change, is going to go to the top 5% of taxpayers with incomes over \$100,000 a year. Talk about Robin Hood in reverse. Talk about a shift of the tax burden downward on to those least able to pay, to benefit the government's friends like Frank Stronach and others.

2100

That's a huge shift. Frankly, it's a huge loss in income for the government because there is a cost when the government has tax breaks for wealthy corporations and its wealthy friends. In this case, \$3.1 billion will be lost as that surtax is eliminated. Frank Stronach is going to get \$3.5 million. Do I think he needs \$3.5 million? No, I certainly don't. Obviously, that's clear from my com-

ments. Do I think it's going to make a big difference in the economy, that he's going to do something with that that might create more jobs or wealth? No, I don't. He's just going to add that to his own personal wealth and go waltzing merrily down the road with it, along with the break that he's going to get from this government on paying a third of his property taxes for his \$10-million estate.

It's clear who this government is here for. They're making it absolutely clear in this budget because we all recognize we're heading into an election and they're trying to appeal to their core support. But that comes at a very significant cost to people who can least afford it. That's the real shame of what this government is doing. They have never been here to govern for anyone; they have used all of their time in office and all of their tax cuts to really benefit wealthy corporations and their wealthy friends.

A third change that the government has most recently announced—I don't think it was in the budget; it probably came out in the platform, but let me reference it anyway. That has to do with the requirement of municipalities to hold a referendum before they increase property taxes. Needless to say, there's not much of a positive reaction on that from our special part of the world. That has to do directly with the fact that under this government since 1996, we have seen tremendous downloading of services and a tremendous loss in grants. In fact, the city of Greater Sudbury has estimated that the total impact of lost provincial grants is approximately \$126 million from 1996 to now—a loss of \$126 million in provincial grants that our city and the outlying municipalities, which have now been forcibly amalgamated into the city, used to receive.

Part of the reason that municipalities like ours have been forced to increase property taxes is directly as a result of these kinds of losses in provincial grants and the kinds of downloading of services on to municipalities that this government still refuses to pay for.

Let me give you some examples. This, interestingly enough, comes from a presentation that was made on February 13, 2003, to the Ministry of Finance round table when the minister was in Sudbury. It's a presentation made by the city of Greater Sudbury, whose mayor is one Jim Gordon, who used to be a Conservative MPP and Conservative cabinet minister—a friend of these guys.

In the presentation he gave—well, he might not have, himself, so let me just correct the record—the presentation from the city, and he had a letter on the top of it so it was clear it was done with his endorsement, made it really clear that there has been a real revenue imbalance with respect to downloading. Here are some examples of the increased cost that the city is picking up this year as a result of the downloading of services.

Number one: ongoing increases in costs with regard to Ontario Works and children's services. "The province has imposed a ceiling on its subsidy for administration which does not recognize salary, benefits, rent increases, etc. These costs are passed on to the municipality at

100% dollars. An estimate for Ontario Works indicates that this alone will cost \$440,000 in 2003."

Second example: "There is insufficient funding for social housing. In 1998, the city became responsible for social housing and assumed approximately 5,500 units. The revenue neutrality of this transfer was questioned at the time and is still questioned today. The 2003 social housing budget, net of CRF changes, has increased by \$900,000"—an additional cost at the local level.

Third example: "The provincial offences revenue that was used to offset the CRF calculation was never realized. Because the CRF does not take into consideration lost revenue in provincial offences, this has resulted in a cost to the city of an additional \$700,000."

Fourth example: "Again dealing with the CRF, the province has imposed an unrealistic salary cap for land ambulance services—namely 2%. Salary increases today in both the private and public sectors are over 3%. This will add approximately \$700,000 to the municipal budget in 2003. Cross-border billing also remains an ... issue. This could cost a further \$700,000 if not resolved."

Those are just the increased costs the municipality is dealing with in 2003 as a result of flaws in downloading, as a result of the additional costs that the government put down, as a result of the fact the government doesn't want to recognize that this change was not revenue-neutral. Those are some of the costs this year. The total impact so far of lost provincial grants is \$126 million. It's really difficult for our municipality—and the taxpayers in it—to swallow this government's latest proposal that they're going to require municipalities to hold a referendum before they increase property taxes.

We are having to increase property taxes directly as a result of this downloading of provincial services without associated provincial funding under this government. We are having to increase municipal property taxes directly as a result of the loss of provincial grants, be that subsidies for public transit, subsidies for roads, which again costs our municipality about \$8.5 million. That's why we're having to do it—directly as a result of actions of the provincial government.

It's an insult for this government to come forward now and say that they will insist the municipalities have a referendum before they increase property taxes, because this government refuses to put the money on the table that's necessary for municipalities to deliver important core services.

The final issue I want to raise has to do with an issue I have had some involvement in over the past year, and that involves autism and autistic children. The budget made an announcement that there would be an increase in funding in 2003-04 for autism services. What's interesting is the government made a previous announcement about additional funding as long ago as November 18, when the minister, under pressure because of the cases we were raising, the families we were bringing here and the children who had autism whom we brought to this Legislature—the government started to feel some pressure and, on November 18, the minister

made an announcement that the government would double funding for IBI treatment by 2006-07.

What was interesting about the announcement at the time was that the government did not set out a timetable for this increased funding. No, they didn't do that at all. Secondly, the government did not end its discrimination against autistic children aged six whose IBI treatment is abruptly cancelled, terminated by this government immediately upon that child turning age six.

I have discovered, because I've been talking with some of those agencies that provide IBI services for the government, that despite the November 18 announcement, despite the announcement again in the budget, the government in fact has not flowed one single penny of that new money to those agencies to deliver IBI services to more children—not a penny; not a cent. Six months ago the government made an announcement of additional funding; not a cent of that has gone out the door. The shame of it is, when that money in fact does go out the door, because some of the agencies have been given a tentative understanding of how much money they're going to receive, the government will hardly make a dent in the waiting lists for service for children who have autism and need IBI. In northern Ontario alone, in all likelihood only two more children who need IBI will be taken off the waiting list and actually provided with treatment—two children out of the many who are on the waiting list.

What is also unacceptable is that the government continues to discriminate against autistic children aged six. It is unacceptable that the government would abruptly terminate treatment for these children who are finally beginning to receive treatment, beginning to do things they could never do before, beginning to have hope, themselves and their parents, that they might actually be able to lead a normal life, live independently and not end up in an institution. But this government continues to discriminate against those children, and that is wrong.

It is also wrong that we have 50 families in court in Toronto right now trying to fight against this government to get what their children so desperately need and should legitimately have. That's an incredible waste of their money. Frankly, it's an incredible waste of taxpayers' money, because so much money has been spent by this government trying to drag these poor parents through court.

In fact, I got an e-mail today from one of the parents who is a litigant in that proceeding who said—this is with respect to the trial that's going on right now where the government is trying to defend its discrimination against these children. The crown is employing two senior lawyers and their assistants. There is daily representation by members of the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. Imagine how much money is being blown trying to deny autistic children the treatment they so desperately need when the government could be using that money to provide treatment to these very same children.



In closing, let me say those are just some of the issues I wanted to highlight. There are many more, but the government has made it clear yet again with its budget that it's here really for one group of people: the rich and famous, and that's whom they're going to continue to support.

**2110**  
**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I appreciate grabbing the torch from the member for Nickel Belt this evening to finish the few comments we have as New Democrats concerned with the budget that was delivered to Magna on behalf of the people of the province.

The member for Nickel Belt spoke of the very clear priority this government has shown for the interests of those who are well-heeled and well off as opposed to those who are out there in communities that all of us represent across this province, struggling from day to day with the agenda this government has foisted upon them.

We're talking this evening about the priorities of government as indicated by the budget they put down, because I think in your personal life, in the life of a family or a business or a community, you can always detect the priorities of that particular person or group of people by where they spend their money, what they spend their money on and what they consider in making decisions about where they spend their money, and that's no less true where governments are concerned. You take a look at whom they talk to, whom they listen to, whom they are influenced by, which brings me then to a question of the process through which this government developed its priorities.

It was mentioned earlier by members of the government that the Minister of Finance went out and spoke to literally hundreds of people across this province. Perhaps she did. The question, though, that's raised with me by my constituents is, who are those hundreds of people? Whom did she meet with? I know when she came to Sault Ste Marie, she met with a very select group of people invited to a particular meeting. I would suggest that 95% to 100% of those people were folks who were card-carrying members of this government, members of the chambers of commerce and members of the community they have delivered for in spades over the last eight years, and continue to deliver for in this budget. She then brought what she gathered from those very select meetings back to this place, put together her budget and delivered it at Magna International, again to a sampling of the people they think are important, who they think should have influence and whom they believe government needs to serve in this province, and indicated by way of the priorities they rolled out that they heard very clearly and very loudly from those folks because the budget reflects that in spades.

If you believe, as I do, that government's first and prime priority is to look after those things and those folks and those groups in your jurisdiction who are most at risk and vulnerable, then you would have to consider this budget a complete and total failure.

In Ontario today one of the things that's at risk, I think reflected by the fact that we had the Walkerton tragedy, is the environment and how we look after the environment and those things that are supported by the environment: our water, our air. Was there anything in this budget to indicate that there's going to be more money spent on the environment and hiring more inspectors, for example, out there in the Ministry of the Environment, to make sure that those things we're doing on behalf of communities and industry are environmentally the correct things to be doing? No, there wasn't. So the government fails on that front.

Is there anything in this budget that reflects a concern by this government for the many communities out there that are literally reeling because of the decision by this government to deregulate and privatize Hydro? No, nothing. Absolutely nothing in here indicates that they either understood or have any interest in understanding or coming to the aid of those communities that are literally on the ropes out there because of the now ever-increasing cost of power and the effect of deregulating its delivery is having on them.

I need to look no further from my own jurisdiction of Sault Ste Marie, north to Wawa, to understand that. The people, the employers and the municipal leaders have been trying to get the attention of this government for over a year now, since the introduction of deregulated and privatized power last May. They can't get anybody to return their calls. They weren't invited to that meeting in Sault Ste Marie where the Minister of Finance came to ask for input and hear about their concerns regarding the budget. They weren't invited to that meeting. They can't even get a meeting with the Minister of Natural Resources, as they try to get some consideration of a fibre allotment that they need in order to set up a new plant in that town. They can't get this government to respond.

I suggest to you that they're only one example of communities across this province having a really difficult time, because of the agenda and priorities of this government, making ends meet, paying their bills and having any hope or optimism for the future as they look at new investment and try to better the lot of the folks who over a long period of time have lived and invested in those communities. The town is dying because of sky-high hydro rates caused by deregulation.

These rates have not been affected by the November rate freeze that the government brought in. Great Lakes Power has sent people registered letters saying that they must pay hundreds, even thousands of dollars to them for the hydro they used up this past winter. They're saying to them, "If you don't pay up, we'll cut you off." Those are the challenges these folks are facing out there. This little town of Wawa is very much, I think, symbolic of the impact that the decision by this government to deregulate and privatize hydro is having out there.

Wawa has become the canary in the coal mine, and people need to know that. People need to sit up and take notice, because it's coming to your neighbourhood next.

The November freeze may have given you some relief, but once that freeze is over, once this government gets back into power, if they should be so successful after the next election, that rate freeze is gone. Deregulated and privatized hydro is on, and then we're all in the same stew Wawa finds itself in now.

In Wawa there's a small family, again I think reflective of many small families across this province—also a small landlord, a small business person who owes \$10,000 to Great Lakes Power that he can't pay. He and his tenants are on the verge of being cut off. It's not just in Wawa, as I said; it's in Echo Bay, where a retired couple, Lyn and Ben Sigfried, owe over \$1,400, almost double what they had to pay last year. Small businesses, including a grocery store in Wawa that I used to work in as a young boy, carrying out and stocking shelves, is closing down. Right next door to that grocery store, which used to be the heart of that community—it's been there for the history of the community—is a clothing store that's closing down too, not to speak of the fact that Dubreuil Forest Products, in a town just north of Wawa, has now laid off over 100 people because they can't afford their hydro bills either.

Was there anything in this budget to respond to and indicate that this government understands and is willing to take the action in order to live up to its responsibility to be a caretaker for those communities and people and issues that are most vulnerable and most at risk in their jurisdiction? Absolutely not, because this government spends too much time in the boardroom at Magna, listening to Frank Stronach and others like him—

**Ms Martel:** Brascan.

**Mr Martin:** —in the boardroom of Brascan. I would guess that if Brascan phoned the Minister of Energy tonight, he'd call them back before midnight. They'd have an immediate return on their phone call. But if Earl Deresky, Dubreuil Forest Products or the mayor of Wawa called, they wouldn't get a call return. They wouldn't answer. They weren't invited to that meeting, they're not in this budget, they don't count, they're not a priority. I suggest to you that if we look closely at this budget and the agenda and activity of this government, you'll find that this isn't an isolated case. This is the way it is for literally thousands and thousands of small businesses, small communities and families across this province.

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Across the north we're seeing job losses because of high hydro rates. In Wawa, Dubreuil Forest Products has laid off 150 people because of high hydro rates. It has also caused layoffs at Kidd Creek mine in Timmins. Northern Ontario has been reeling since this government came into power in 1995 with an economy that just won't get better, because this government doesn't care. This government will not come to the table in the same way as we did from 1990-95 to restructure those resource-based industries that are so important to the economy of this province. Kidd Creek mine in Timmins has had to lay off people because of high hydro rates. Has this government gone to Kidd Creek? Has this government gone to

Timmins? Has this government talked to anybody in that community about the effect of that decision on them and their ability to make a living and keep an economy going? I suggest to you, no, they haven't. They won't even return phone calls.

Not that long ago I myself launched a campaign to try to figure out why so many of our fellow citizens were falling into desperate and dire poverty in this province, not just up in northern Ontario and in small communities but right here, in the heartland of the industrial centre of the country, in Toronto; why so many people were sleeping on the streets at night; why so many people were dying on the streets in the wintertime; why so many families were being ejected from their homes and ending up homeless; why so many people couldn't make ends meet on the income they were making in minimum-wage, part-time jobs in this province. What I found out was that not only were they suffering because they weren't participating in the economy that this government was supporting, in its growth, which accrued most benefit to those who are most well off, but this government was actually implementing programs, taking away opportunity and forcing people into poverty and creating difficulties for them.

One of the things we discovered very early on in our People's Parliament on Poverty was that the federal government decided at one point, in order to live up to the resolution that was passed in the federal House that was introduced by NDP leader Ed Broadbent in 1989 to eradicate poverty by the year 2000, to introduce the child tax benefit supplement, which was going to give \$100 per child to every poor family in this province. We thought that was a great idea. We thought that was a wonderful thing to do and that the provincial government would be most happy to flow that money through so that we would have poor families in communities across this province with more money in their pockets to help feed and clothe their children, pay their rent, participate in the economy of those communities by spending that money and helping small business in those communities. But alas, no. This government decided to claw back the child tax benefit supplement, to literally take money out of the pockets of poor families in this province who happened to be on assistance of one sort or another from the province.

We went out on a campaign to try to get them to stop that. We had literally thousands of people from across this province sign petitions. I was personally in about 12 communities letting them know about this clawback of the child tax benefit supplement from the most vulnerable and at-risk of our families and their children, and I had them sign petitions and write letters. We even set up an e-mail postcard on a Web site. The minister must have been inundated with people asking her—asking him; it used to be the Minister of Energy, and now it's Minister Elliott—to stop the clawback. But did she do that? No, she didn't do that; she didn't stop the clawback. She said, "No, I can't do that. These people are doing OK, thank you very much." The fact that they



can't feed their kids, the fact that their kids have to go to school every morning dependent on what's there by way of a breakfast program, didn't affect her one iota.

The other thing we discovered in this whole process was that people living with disabilities in the province were also living in poverty. On average, a single individual living with a disability in this province on the Ontarians with disabilities support program was making about \$930 a month. That was supposed to cover the cost of their rent, their food and their ability to clothe themselves.

**Hon Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member opposite is giving such an enthralling speech that I wonder if you might check if there is a quorum in the House?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would you check and see if there is a quorum present?

**Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Deputy Clerk:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

**Mr Martin:** I just want people to know that that was the Minister of Energy who called a quorum there. He

used to be the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services—the minister who is attacking small communities, after he attacked poor families. I guess he's practising to be in opposition after the next election, because it's usually the opposition who call for a quorum in this place.

I think the priorities of a government are always clearly indicated by where it plans to spend its money in its budget.

**Hon Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Again, I'm astonished that the member is not drawing a bigger crowd. I wonder if you might check if there is a quorum in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would you check and see if there's a quorum?

**Deputy Clerk:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Deputy Clerk:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think this might be a time when we would—you'll get the rest of your time the next time this comes up for debate.

It being almost 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 2129.*

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	<b>Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony</b> (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	<b>Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen</b> (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	Lanark-Carleton	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Don Valley West / -Ouest	<b>Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Markham	<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.</b> (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Erie-Lincoln	<b>Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim</b> (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	<b>Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda</b> (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		



Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Mississauga South / -Sud Nepean-Carleton	Marland, Margaret (PC) <b>Baird, Hon / L'hon John R.</b> (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint	Scarborough-Agincourt Scarborough-Rouge River Simcoe North / -Nord Simcoe-Grey	Phillips, Gerry (L) Curling, Alvin (L) Dunlop, Garfield (PC) <b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Niagara Centre / -Centre Niagara Falls Nickel Belt Nipissing Northumberland	Kormos, Peter (ND) Maves, Bart (PC) Martel, Shelley (ND) McDonald, AL (PC) <b>Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines St Paul's Stoney Creek	Bradley, James J. (L) Bryant, Michael (L) <b>Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad</b> (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail Cleary, John C. (L)
Oak Ridges	<b>Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh Sudbury Thornhill	Barolucci, Rick (L) <b>Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R.</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Oakville	<b>Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary</b> (PC) Speaker / Président	Thunder Bay-Atikokan Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	McLeod, Lyn (L) Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oshawa	<b>Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J.</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Timiskaming-Cochrane Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Ramsay, David (L) Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre Ottawa-Orléans	Patten, Richard (L) <b>Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian</b> (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale Toronto-Danforth Trinity-Spadina	Smitherman, George (L)  Churley, Marilyn (ND) Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Vaughan-King-Aurora Waterloo-Wellington	Sorbara, Greg (L) Arnott, Ted (PC)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean Ottawa-Vanier Oxford	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)  Boyer, Claudette (Ind) <b>Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie</b> (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Whitby-Ajax       Willowdale	<b>Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation <b>Young, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Parkdale-High Park Parry Sound-Muskoka Perth-Middlesex Peterborough Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Kennedy, Gerard (L) Miller, Norm (PC) Johnson, Bert (PC) Stewart, R. Gary (PC) <b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet</b> (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Windsor West / -Ouest Windsor-St Clair York Centre / -Centre York North / -Nord York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston York West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L) Duncan, Dwight (L) Kwinter, Monte (L) Munro, Julia (PC) Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Prince Edward-Hastings Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke Sarnia-Lambton Sault Ste Marie	Parsons, Ernie (L) Conway, Sean G. (L)  Di Cocco, Caroline (L) Martin, Tony (ND)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)  Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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